

QUADERNI d'italianistica

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QUADERNI d'italianistica

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ARTICOLI

FRANCO FORTINI	
Opus servile	5
JULIANA SCHIESARI	
Mo(u)rning and Melancholia: Tasso and the Dawn of Psychoanalysis	13
MASSIMO VERDICCHIO	
Svevo and the Ironic Conscience of the Novel	28
FIORA A. BASSANESE	
<i>Una donna</i> : Autobiography as Exemplary Text	41
GABRIELE ERASMI	
αὐτοδίδακτος δ' εἰμί· Libero Bigiaretti e il rapporto con l'altro ne <i>Le indulgenze</i> e ne <i>Il viaggiatore</i>	61
I.T. OLKEN	
The Written and Unwritten Worlds of Marcovaldo and Calvino	72

NOTE E RASSEGNE

LLOYD HOWARD	
Linguistic Patterns and Internal Structure in Five <i>canti</i> of the <i>Inferno</i>	85
ANTHONY PAREL	
Machiavelli's Use of <i>umori</i> in <i>The Prince</i>	91
MICHAEL LETTIERI	
<i>L'Orazia</i> di P. Aretino: riflessioni sulla scelta del testo-base	102
DOMENICO PIETROPAOLO	
Vico and Modern Thought: A Pedagogical Proposal	111
GIOVANNA A. WEDEL	
Il poeta in pubblico negli anni Settanta	122
MARGUERITE WALLER	
Whose <i>Dolce Vita</i> is this anyhow? The Language of Fellini's Cinema	127
HUGH J. SILVERMAN	
Concerning <i>Differentia</i>	136
ROCCO CAPOZZI	
Intervista a Franco Fortini	140

PICCOLA BIBLIOTECA

Michelangelo Picone, ed.	
<i>Dante e le forme dell'allegoresi</i> . (David P. Bénétteau)	146
J. M. De Bujanda, ed.	
<i>Index des Livres Interdits. III. Index de Venise 1549; Venise et Milan 1554</i> . (Rita Belladonna)	147
Luigi Monga and Chris Hassel	
<i>Travel Through France and Italy (1647-9)</i> (Kenneth R. Bartlett)	149

Gian Piero Maragoni	
<i>L'onda e la spira. Saggio di ricerca sull'artificio anacronico nel</i> <i>"Conquisto di Granata" di Girolamo Graziani (Francesco Guardiani)</i>	150
Gregory L. Lucente	
<i>Beautiful Fables: Self-consciousness in Italian Narrative from</i> <i>Manzoni to Calvino (Franco Ricci)</i>	151
Matilde Serao	
<i>Il romanzo della fanciulla (Lucienne Kroha)</i>	152
Carlo Emilio Gadda	
<i>L'ingegner fantasia. Lettere a Ugo Betti 1919-1930 (Gaetana Marrone)</i>	157
Nicola Merola, ed.	
<i>Il poeta e la poesia (Peter Carravetta)</i>	159

SCHEDE

(a cura di Massimo Ciavolella, Antonio Franceschetti, Francesco Guardiani e Olga Z. Pugliese)	163
Maria Pia Pozzato, ed., <i>L'idea deforme. Interpretazioni esoteriche</i> <i>di Dante</i> ; Filippo Redditi, <i>Exhortatio ad Petrum Medicem con appendice</i> <i>di lettere</i> ; Lucia Miele, <i>Modelli e ruoli sociali nei "Memoriali"</i> <i>di Diomede Carafa</i> ; Raffaele Manica, <i>Il critico e il furore</i> ; Pasquale Sabbatino, <i>La 'scienza' della scrittura. Dal progetto del Bembo al</i> <i>Manuale</i> ; Maria Cristina Cafisse, Francesco D'Episcopo, Vincenzo Dolla, Tonia Fiorino, Lucia Miele, eds., <i>Rinascimento meridionale e altri</i> <i>studi in onore di Mario Santoro</i> ; Anna Maria Razzoli Roio, ed., <i>La</i> <i>fucina poetica. Madrigalisti siciliani del Seicento</i> ; Emanuele Tesauo, <i>Edipo</i> ; Mario Santoro, ed., <i>Leopardi nella critica internazionale</i> ; Fabio Finotti, <i>Sistema letterario e diffusione del Decadentismo nell'Italia</i> <i>di fine '800. Il carteggio Vittorio Pica - Neera</i> ; Wladimir Krysinski, <i>Il paradigma inquieto. Pirandello e lo spazio comparativo della</i> <i>modernità</i> ; Glauco Cambon, <i>Verso "Paterson."</i> William Carlos Williams <i>dalla lirica all'epos</i> ; Northrop Frye, <i>Mito metafora simbolo</i>	

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Opus servile*

1. These days the aesthetics of the reception of the literary text and neo-Marxist aesthetics join in the affirmation that correlations, correspondences, metrical figures, significant forms and figures of literary discourse—in short, every level of the so-called text, from the phonemic to the ideological-cultural—are comprehensible and appreciable not only thanks to their realization within a system and structure, but also for the relation and interaction that each of these elements establishes with *something that is not text*, or rather with what we call “reality,” provided that we believe that the world is not a discourse and that a thing is not a word.

“In this class do we believe in poems and things, or is it just us?” asked a by now proverbial girl from Johns Hopkins, according to Stanley Fish’s account (*Is There a Text in This Class?* [Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP, 1980] 305). I want to reassure that clever girl right away, before we proceed any further: it is not only us. On the contrary, we believe (at least I believe) in poetry and in things. Having said this, I know that I have placed myself apart from those who, by identifying word and thought, deny substantial differences between the modes and the types of discourse as well as between verbal discourse and non-verbal communication.

Let us admit, then, an extra-text or, let’s say, a *context*, a “naïve” outside of poetry and discourse. Its identity is no more demonstrable than were the metaphysics of Aristotle or of St. Thomas, or the Kantian relation between phenomenon and essence. What do I mean, then, if I say “context”? *The ensemble of the circumstances in which literary discourse offers itself*. Or as Van Dijk wrote many years ago, *the ensemble of psychological, sociological, historical, and anthropological conditions, actions and functions of literary texts*.

And what is the meaning of “conditions, actions and functions”?

At least two things: the first is the ensemble of pressures, forces, indexes, and vectors that, from the outside or *from the context*, move in the time and work of the author, determining his text; the second is the ensemble of pressures, forces, indexes and vectors that issue from the text to act upon the outside, or better, *upon the context*, constituted by the so-called consumers, by readers and listeners of today and tomorrow, and by their expectations.

If at this point, along with much cultural and literary sociology, we affirm that what manifests itself in the literary work is an ensemble of social relations, there will be two ways of understanding this affirmation: either those relations coincide with the zone of existence and anthropological reality, which is by definition social, in which case to say “social relation”

and to say human existence and human reality is to say one and the same thing; or, alternatively, we are dealing with a particular sector of the whole ensemble of social relations that, in a more determinant manner, presides over the birth of literature and its reception, a sector that coincides with the individuality or personality of the author. The first case dissolves the text within a mechanically objective totality. The second case dissolves the text within a mechanically subjective totality (in the manner of idealist and nominalist critics). With the first position we would remain within the terms of a direct causality, mechanical and passive; there would be nothing more in the thing or in the text than what would have been in the "causes" or in the context, and thus the criticisms that dominate every vulgar determinism and sociologism would prove correct. Friedrich Engels spoke of this in an oft-cited letter to Heinz Starkenburg with regard to literary realism. But even if we were to take into account what Engels called "long periods" (or cycles of greater amplitude), we could not avoid what occurs at every paralleling of the literary series and the socio-historical series. The circulation of literature would be equivalent to that of the stock market, not to the process of the creation of "surplus value." The social relation, or relations, would form a part only of the "conditions," and not of the "actions" and "functions" whose ensemble is, as we have seen, the context.

In other words: *in every true poem and in every great narration are contained elements that, beginning from the verbal form of the text, aim to touch upon or implicate extratextual spaces different from those that contributed to its birth.* Here "true" and "great" signify precisely that addition or diversity, that coming from a faraway and barely-visible area, and also a going farther away, or rather towards something that is not yet visible. They present, in advance, to the view of the world (they manifest, they call upon) those who will have to receive and interpret them. This is, above all, the point of departure of all methodological discourses that preoccupy themselves with interpretation and reception. To allude to cycles even longer than those described by Engels is not the same, however, as carrying out a mere extension of the cycles that are discernable (or at least knowable) from human history, but it is rather to indicate that those cycles assume the characteristics of the eras (or better: of the anthropological zones) that see reconciled, and eventually superimposed, the history of man and the history of nature.

I now intend to touch upon a hypothesis that serves to individuate some of the extratextual elements (understood as cultural levels of "extremely long duration") that are supposed present in the two moments of every text: that of production and that of reception or consumption.

2. I assume a portion of a linguistic theory of the poetic function of language—that of Jakobson—and I parallel it with a famous philosophical myth that was intended to interpret a nodal moment of interhuman relations, a node that is at once metaphysical, anthropological and socio-historical.

I wonder if it is possible that the coordinates of the first theory, usually applied to texts in order to bring to light the passages that constitute their poeticity, cannot establish, in contact with that juncture, a double flow of causes and effects. Obviously, one would not at all want to detract from the decisive dignity of philological verification, which is always a verification of a *prius*. Nor, on the other hand, would one want to run the risk of the extreme position of reception aesthetics, that is, to consider the text as the very creation of its receivers. What I am saying certainly has to do with the Russian formalist thesis concerning the establishing of dominant elements or levels in literary texts, which, with the variation of conditions of interpretation, alternate command, so to speak. From this point of view what I am saying comes close, rather, to a theory of genres, indeed to a sort of “transcendental psychology” of genres, where, for example, “prose” and “poetry” instead of distinguishing themselves by different degrees of rhythm do so by different degrees of intensity and dominance of language’s poetic function (in Jakobson’s sense) over the other copresent functions; but also by other means of which I will soon speak.

As we know, Jakobson affirms that in the poetic function of language, equivalence and similarity prevail over contiguity, or rather over the norms of verbal succession. Where the prevalence of this function over the other functions of language is more intense, the more would every single text be, or tend to be, a space and time closed in upon itself, centripetal; an identity, an eternal return, constantly privileging symmetry, harmony, a calculated game of variables and invariables, tending towards tautology, towards the confirmation of the initial given. The language of poetry, like magical, religious and liturgical language, would reveal itself, we know, as the language of repetition, of doubling, of the return, of parallelism. Perhaps it is not useless to remember that this conception of poetry as lyric and of lyric as a tendential unity turned in upon itself is only the projection of a well-determined aesthetic and social experience, that of the lyric of the moderns, from the origins of symbolism to the present; and I believe instead that one might as well look to Hegel’s lessons on aesthetics where he writes: “But however far the work of art may form a world inherently harmonious and complete, still, as an actual single object, it exists not for *itself*, but for *us*, for a public which sees and enjoys the work of art” (I, iii, 3).

And it is indeed from Hegel that I draw reference (although conscious of altering, by interrupting it, the dialectical process of his thinking) for what I called the philosophical myth to compare it with the Jakobsonian thesis of the two axes of language. I refer to the much celebrated pages of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* concerning the dialectic of master and slave. The servile labor of which Hegel speaks is a moment of the Spirit but it is also a phase of human history, and far from concluded. The present so-called post-industrial societies seem only to have interiorized that relation and that conflict within each of us while in their periphery there endures the servile condition

of the suppliers of raw materials and of those condemned to repetitive labor.

Labor—and even “artistic” labor, from the *bricolage* of the so-called primitives to the medieval and renaissance guild of artisans and finally to the modern writer seated at his personal computer—is a sequence of operations through which the slave defends himself from death and, in retrospect, emancipates himself. The production of discourse is formational. It gives birth to “forms.” Yet the slave does not produce form for his own use—*sic vos non vobis*, according to Virgil—but for the use of the Master. The Slave, who lives vicissitudes and time and who lives under the anxiety of death (the “Absolute Master”) and in the flight before it, labors, we can say, in the syntagmatic or horizontal dimension, one step after another, one gesture after another, one word after another as is peculiar to the prevalently communicative, persuasive, phatic discourse, that is, of the metonymic functions of language (or, for Jakobson, its prosaic functions). In this way, the servile moment achieves a form, a conclusion, an object, the *Tagerwerk meiner Hände* of which Goethe spoke; the lordly moment—or even that of the slave himself and of the other slaves, in the intervals of their work—will be enjoyed as the spoil of pain and suffering, provided that and until it is concealed from the fatality of the tendency towards a goal, from the press of time as cruel necessity.

It will be so at least until the absolute—which is inherent in the form itself—does not induce (behind its apparent serenity) a frost of anxiety in the lords threatened by the labor of the slaves who have transferred, translated, their own strain against time into an object that inevitably announces the end of the masters of time. Hence the Stendhalian “promise of happiness,” of which Adorno speaks, can turn into a sinister promise of misfortune.

The servile time of labor (even literary labor) could be homologous, thus, to the syntagmatic axis of discourse, whether the anonymous peasant or Goethe himself were to follow it. Indeed, when the worker of words will want to sign his own pages (perhaps at the foot of the page in the dedication to the most powerful lord or merchant, or in thanks for a contribution from this or that foundation) he will reveal nothing so clearly as his own condition. Never has that illusion been so alive as in the poetry from Romanticism to the present, when (following the ages and the societies in which sacerdotal and legislative functions did not distinguish themselves from literary ones) poets considered themselves the unacknowledged legislators of humanity, and (as Sartre shows in some pages of his *Flaubert*) the writers made themselves up as feudal lords in order to eliminate their condition as wage-earners, as they were already called in the *Manifesto* in 1848. Even today the signature is the most economical form of social promotion.

A syntagmatic or (to use Jakobsonian terminology) metonymic quota or part cannot not exist even in the most vertical and sealed sonnet of Mallarmé. The temporal processuality of language finds its limit only in silence. We can thus call “prose” those texts in which the syntagmatic moment, of succession

and of articulation along the temporal axis, tends to prevail over closed space and over the sphere of repetition, conclusion and return, which is metaphorical and "poetic" or, more properly, lyrical. The reality of writing exists between these two poles: where the processuality (or temporal movement) inherent in any linguistic sequence opposes itself, with a high degree of countertendency, against repetition, identity, circularity, immobility. Persuasive, rational, demonstrative or narrative discourse is pushed towards lordly *otium* and towards consumption, the suspension of work, recreation and rest. This need or exigency is satisfied, we know, even by the apparently most "horizontal" forms such as romance narratives; but actually even in those "servile" forms there is tension concerning the event, the "suspense," while what is "lordly," rather, is the reordering process of the narrative trajectory, which, beginning from the end, transforms what was at first arranged in unidirectional exegesis into a circle, or rather into a repetitive and closed process. And, naturally, the epic and the romance made use of techniques of retardation and of repetition which lyric, especially modern lyric, has eminently privileged (as Bakhtin has shown us), such as the iteration of epithets, metrical structures, the rhythmic recurrences of characters, situations and sentences, the so-called "style" of the narration. Not accidentally, the Soviet critic related what he called the "carnavalesque moment" to the "polyphony" of romance; not accidentally, historically, the passage from the epic (a "high" genre and, through its metrical foundations, very close to the de-realizing processes of "poetry") to the "novel" was perceived, in many places and times, as a descent towards the lowly along the scale of social classes. Excess and disharmony emerge from the servile moment when it wants to advance on the long process of emancipation by means of carnival or of plebeian revolt (and, much like these, excess and disharmony are ephemeral). When, as is normal in the history of literature and frequent in political revolution, nothing more occurs than that the leopards overturn the sacred urns, as Kafka says, one enters into liturgy.

According to an extreme interpretation of Jakobson's thought (which I cannot share completely but which is useful in order to make evident that which serves the present discourse) the poetic function would correspond, then, to the "already formed," where time is subtracted, reduced to a minimum or folded into a circle. It is a product; but among products it is the one that best conceals its own origin. *Wir singen wie die Vögel singen*, says the singer of a Goethean ballad, before the King and his knights and ladies. And, as an associate member of the lordly class, he can refuse the golden chain, preferring a simple glass of wine; but it was not this way when he composed this ballad of his along the dusty and muddy road or in the tavern populated by rogues and wenches. And what is more, he forgets, or does not want to know, that the apparent gratuitousness of his song was helping to establish always greater possibilities of lordly domination over companions of his own sort. For this, according to the times, he will now be sent to eat with the

servants, now be associated with the throne, sharing a little bit of power, maligned or loaded with benefices, buried in communal graves or in the pantheons of schools and deluxe editions. (And the "dilettante" will instead be the one who wants to participate in the concrete life of creative work without relinquishing lordly consumption).

This relation between art and domination, like that between *eros* and domination, ensures that literary writings appear continually divided between a "poetic" identity—which ever moves towards completeness and inviolability and, at its limits, becomes *echolalia* and ecstasy—and a "prosaic" identity which is the uninterrupted exploration and elaboration of the unordered and of things to come, whence challenge and research. At least this is the pattern of the last two centuries of western literature. Thus the question long discussed by T. W. Adorno reasserts itself: that of the "conciliatory" character of poetry, conciliatory if and because intransitive.

3. Because Adorno views that "conciliatory" character of poetry as always inseparable from that of refusal, rupture, denunciation, negation, transgression. For this reason he believed in avant-garde art or in the avant-gardism of art and poetry. This, he wrote, is like Achilles' spear: it wounds and heals. But we who have experienced, much more than Adorno could have foreseen, the enormous development of the culture industry as the extreme form of modern slavish domination, are brought rather to believe that, however inadequate it may be, the only honorable way for poetry to proceed in our own times certainly does not consist in its resistance to "conciliation" nor in a forward flight in order to save its own capacities of denial. In contrast to Adorno, we have discerned in the spirit of the most recent avant-gardes (but also, to a certain degree, in those of our entire century) an objective complicity with oppression, which only those slaves enlisted to repress the revolts of other slaves know how to develop. The culture industry and mass nihilism are responsible for furnishing negations at a discount. Whence emerges the paradoxical legitimacy of mannerisms, or let's call them "postmodern" usages, or rather of the radical refusal to negate anything, while indeed being rich in affirmative dispositions and the willingness to recuperate a bit of everything, as if it were material to plunder from the boundless *marché-aux-puces* of the civilizations known to us. As Jameson has written, we can overcome this, if we believe it necessary to do so, only by putting into crisis its premises and procedures. Adorno wrote against "affirmative" culture and "conciliatory" art, recognizing that poetry always sings at the table of the powerful and is complicit in the horror of the world; but he would not accept, if one were to suggest it, with Lukàcs, that this occurs because literature, like art, is "mimetic," in the Aristotelian sense of the word. Because, that is, by "imitating" nature and history it tends also to imitate its unlimited ambiguity and polysemy and thus to present itself—however much times and readers rotate and change, in the history of fortune and criticism—with a wealth of

contradictory meanings; indeed, just as nature and history do around us and in us.

Usually, in the neoplatonic tradition, we associate the *poiein* with liberty and the *prattein* with necessity; here we suggest, instead, that every work, even “poetic” work, is in the order of necessity and servile and that not even birds sing in “liberty.” Variations of a cliché that is also true: that there is a strict relationship between satiety and dance, repose and song, ease and spectacle, consumption and poetry. Only thus is the contradiction apparent between servile condition and intellectual status attributed by many societies and civilizations to the poet, co-opted from the caste of scribes and priests by means of the privilege of writing. In fact, the author is also the first consumer of himself, and he thus shares in the unavoidable duplicity of freed men.

4. From here we can return to the historical and sociological description, or better, the philological description, of works, which can only prove to us the changeable and extremely variable realities that manifest themselves between the two extreme poles that we have discussed. Indeed, to abandon the Hegelian scale that has helped us to arrive at this point, we can say that the tension between the lordly and servile state and between “poetry” and “prose” need no longer be read as a moment in the phenomenology of Spirit but as a *depositum historiae*, as one speaks of alluvial and also hereditary deposits; something that takes part in both geology and tradition at the same time. A condition which, by its relative unfathomability, has many of the characteristics of what Jameson has called the “political unconscious.”

Cultural stratification and rigidification, which pre-exist and preside over that which we call a “text,” are produced by accumulation and selection across long and extremely long cycles in the mode of production and reproduction of life. The point is not only to augment the amplitude or duration of cycles consequent to certain fundamental modes and relations of production; but rather, as has been said above, to look at those that, in their duration and amplitude, present themselves to view with a constancy similar to that of the constellations (which, however, we know to be anything but constant). Not so-called “human nature” but certainly some of its parts and ages — such as the sphere of primal needs, or the typology of the relations between the sexes or between the different ages of man — are examples of such fundamental modes and relations. Even those ages of humanity that are historically approachable or very close to ourselves present themselves as relatively unfathomable. Do not the forms of pre-Christian slavery reassert themselves, perhaps, in the quotidian sexual psychopathology of the modern cities? In the final analysis, the unconscious is a forgotten society and in that forgotten society (or, to put it better, translated and masked in the current terms of the present society) the master-slave relation is the capital moment. Its reflection is visible in the current ideologies of art and of literature and, most of all, in the fable of poetry as the lordly moment of Spirit.

That which in the Hegelian "myth" was an eternal moment, subtracted from history, is not only to be found by descending along the chain of historical causes to the end where the mire of the centuries no longer permits us to distinguish them, but also (in our case) by means of that specific criticism of the literary institution that is accomplished by confronting it with other institutions of human conviviality. Such criticism cannot reduce itself to a mere dismantling of ideologies dominant in one time or one given society. It must remind itself of the deep structures that conceal these ideologies from view. Relations of power and domination have (this is the summary of the hypothesis that I have tried to explain) a relationship with the functions of language that is not only symbolical or allegorical. And does not the system of genres, beyond the correspondence with capital moments of psychic life, found itself also on the *history* of those moments? And therefore also on the historical forms of the master-slave relation? The history of feelings and thought mirrors itself in the history of interhuman relations determined by conflicts of survival and also by the profound fantasms that inhabit us, and therefore by the political unconscious and finally by the universe of needs and of the political economy. Why not turn to ask ourselves if the various degrees of the figures of discourse and of rhythm, the succession of the syntactic axis that overturns in flight towards paradigmatic immobility, and in short all the interweavings of "prose" and "poetry" in which we live, do not have their roots (and their flowers) also in what half a century ago Bertolt Brecht called "*the dry, 'ignoble' lexicon of the dialectical economy*"?

University of Siena

Translated by Patrick Rumble

* This is a lecture read at the Department of Italian Studies of the University of Toronto in the Autumn of 1987.

Mo(u)rning and Melancholia: Tasso and the Dawn of Psychoanalysis

The dialogue between literature and psychoanalysis has provided some of the most virulent paradigms for critical practice in the twentieth century.¹ Just as a vast array of approaches to texts has been informed by psychoanalytic theory, so psychoanalytic discourse has revealed its debt not only to the literary texts that name some of its major concepts but also to the more complex insistence of tropes, genres and narrative models which have structured that discourse's various elaborations. Until recently though, comparatively little has been done to question the historical and cultural limits of Freud's theoretical constructs (in fact, quite a bit has been done, notably by the Jungian movement, precisely to dehistoricize Freud's categories into universal truths of the human condition), not in order to dismiss them out of antiquarian reaction nor to insert them into a comfortable narrative of development, but to bring difference to bear upon the Freudian models in order to rethink the scope of their applicabilities and pertinences. Rather, to elaborate a history of the neuroses is to analyze their curious empowerment through literary and cultural representations, the force of whose mythic transmissions does not allow the psychoanalyst to construct them objectively as in a vacuum but may invade or inflect the very formulations psychoanalysis attempts to produce on their account. The following essay mobilizes a psychoanalytic approach for the discussion of one neurosis, melancholia, in one of its prime representatives, Torquato Tasso, in order to re-place Freud's essay, "Mourning and Melancholia" (4: 243–58), within the context produced by our analysis.

In his *Vita di Dante*, Boccaccio said that Dante was "malinconico e pensoso" (30), words which recall the opening lines of Petrarch's celebrated sonnet, "Solo e pensoso i più deserti campi / vo mesurando a passi tardi e lenti." As Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl have argued, Petrarch, "perhaps the first of a type of men who are conscious of being men of genius, had himself experienced the contrast between exultation and despair very poignantly indeed" (248). But, as these scholars also and accurately note, Petrarch was still "far from describing" this contradictory ecstasy of sadness as melancholy. In fact, it was the philosopher, Marsilio Ficino, who, in the fifteenth century, explicitly drew the "equation" between the Aristotelian category of melancholy and the Platonic notion of 'divine frenzy.'² This Renaissance perception of the imbrication between impairment and creative power, fueled by the drive for an intellectual distinction based on individualism, allowed for a pathos of melancholy to emerge. In the fifteenth century, a pathos of melancholy

as grief did indeed emerge, through the alignment of the notions of *tristesse* and *melancolie* (Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl 217–228), a grief more akin to Freud's notion of melancholic mourning than to the affective reaction to a concrete loss. In this fifteenth century pathos of grief, there existed a sense of the tragic, of finitude coupled with a heightened awareness of the self, a self different from the common *vulgus* and by virtue of this difference, extraordinary. The melancholic not only became perceived as an exclusive someone but he also perceived himself as exclusive: his identity bore the supposed traits of difference but the difference became so extreme that the melancholic's world paradoxically belonged to a hyper-exclusivity such that no difference could exist. The very nature of the melancholic was to be that of the self split against the self, in a dialogue with its own imaginary, desirous of fusion and frustrated because of this impossibility. In some cases, as with Michelangelo, melancholia was even to be the artist's joy: "La mia allegrezza è la maninconia" (line 25). In other words, the more the artist suffered, especially through self-denial, the more he became emblematic of superior aesthetic virtues.

Inasmuch as many philosophical treatises of the fifteenth century dealt with the thematics of the artist as melancholic, Torquato Tasso emerged as the figure in the late Renaissance who most explicitly embodied the pathological status given those who grieve too long for an impossible union with the Ideal through their fixated desire to negate finitude. He accordingly came to define the new subjectivity of the "homo melancholicus" to an extreme: i.e., one full of doubts and fears, one for whom the existence of any alterity in the world comes at the cost of his exclusivity, which is necessarily impugned by his inevitable participation in the society of women and men. With Tasso, we, therefore, see the rise of a subjectivism which finds its source of identity within melancholy, the by now preferred illness of the gods. Yet as such a divine madness, wherein the melancholic suffers the exclusive fantasy of being the chosen one, precisely because he suffers, what emerges is the image of a figure, Tasso, emblematic of severe states of depression, persecutionary fantasies and babbling madness.³ My intent is not to criticize melancholy from the point of view of some hypothetically pure or normative state of "health," but rather to unravel the stakes in this historicized form of self-identity, a form for which Tasso undoubtedly became a European model, as evidenced by such illustrious imitators as Rousseau, Hölderlin, Nerval or even Senatspräsident Schreber.⁴ As early as his contemporary Montaigne (2.12.492), Tasso was seen to represent melancholic madness, to represent the split operative in the *belle-âme*, who having projected its imaginative force onto its desire for an ontological and epistemological certitude which cannot be had, mourns the loss of this ideal by incorporating the ideal back into itself as an ideal self, whose suffering is the incremental sign of an unappreciated, or even persecuted, but divinely accredited genius.

Torquato Tasso's dialogue, *Il Messaggiero*, explicitly discusses the poet's

melancholic state even as the discourse is structured by the unconscious forces that condition that state. First begun in 1580 and finished in 1583, it was written during the poet's incarceration in the prison hospital of Santa Anna. The dialogue begins at dawn with an auditory hallucination when a spirit visits the poet, a spirit whose sweet voice, *voce così piana e così soave* (6), is there not to admonish him for his errors but to assure him that his vision is "real." On behalf of the poet's request, the spirit appears to him in a form, not unlike, the messenger says, the poet's own *anima*. From this moment, which I will return to, the poet then dedicates approximately two pages on the subject of melancholy, especially on his form of melancholic madness. His own particular form of melancholia is here said to resemble a hydra. The dialogue then proceeds onto a lengthy discussion of the phenomenon of spirits and demons, and finally ends with an analysis of the nature and duty of the ambassador, understood as he who goes between the prince or representative of the state and the individual subject or citizen. In this particular case, Tasso is referring to Vincenzo Gonzaga, the person whom the poet hoped would intercede on his behalf in securing his freedom from Duke Alfonso of Ferrara. I would like, then, to discuss briefly the first two sections of this text: Tasso's vision and his discussion of melancholia.

Let us begin at the beginning, at the dawn or morning of his mourning.

Era già l'ora che la vicinanza del sole comincia a rischiarare l'orizzonte, quando a me, che ne le delicate piume giaceva co' sensi non fortemente legati dal sonno, ma così leggermente che il mio stato era mezzo fra la vigilia e la quiete, si fece a l'orecchio quel gentile spirto che suole favellarmi ne le mie imaginazioni, e mi chiamò per quel nome che è comune a tutti quelli i quali son nati ne la mia stirpe. (6)

[It was already the hour when the nearness of the sun begins to re-illuminate the horizon, and while I was lying on delicate feathers with my senses not tightly bound up in sleep but loosened in a state somewhere between wakefulness and repose, when that gentle spirit who speaks to my imagination made itself known to my ear and called me by that name which is common to all those born in my clan.]⁵

The disembodied voice of the matinal spirit announces itself to the poet in a manner reminiscent of the archangel Gabriel who announced to the virgin that she was to give birth to Christ, whose conception in her womb took place through the ear that listened to the messenger angel's inseminating words. For Tasso's spirit generates in the poet a desire to give birth to something beautiful in "some gentle and beautiful souls," (in *alcun animo bello e gentile* [16]), a set of qualifications by which Tasso characterizes himself in this dialogue and which accordingly signals the exclusivity of this extraordinary group of souls among whom the poet finds himself. The exclusivity of this brotherhood, as well as its fundamental narcissism, is brought forth when the poet asks to see the body of the voice he hears, a body which the spirit says is an image not unlike that of Tasso's soul which he would have taken with him from

the heavens when the soul became united to his body. The poet desirous to see the body of this spirit, which putatively mirrors the spirit in his body, is granted his wish. In a dramatic moment, with a gust of wind and a profusion of sunrays, the spirit reveals his form to Tasso while the poet is still lying in his bed. What appears to Tasso in this literal in-corporation is a young man (un giovane), beardless (non avea le guance d'alcun pelo ricoperte), of white skin and blond hair (bianco e biondo), and with only a thin veil (sottilissimo velo) which covered nothing of his beautiful person (che nulla ricopriva de la sua bella persona) (13). This erotic figure of a young man, who embodies the spiritual interlocutor whose body reflects Tasso's own soul inspires in the poet the desire to generate, to *partorire*, to give birth, to something beautiful (16). This birth, he is quick to qualify, is not corporal but spiritual. And picking up the traditional school of love psychology, he says that such desire is born in him through the virtue he sees descending from the spirit's eyes into the poet's heart. The metaphor of birth is continued by the poet who says that he now feels the "itch" (prurito) of "new wings" (novelle piume) sprouting on himself, wings which his soul had unjustly lost in its violent descent into its body (16). But since the poet is sure that now his experience is not a dream, he asks whether he is not in the grips of fantasy, of the imaginative force of the *vis imaginativa*.

In raising the question of a possible "alienazione di mente," the text then turns around the epistemological problem of the veracity of sensory perception. Always aware of his condition as a *déraciné*, Tasso frames the discussion of the epistemological and ontological alienation wreaked by the imagination within the context of his own melancholia and already celebrated madness. The poet says that his mental alienation is related to two types of melancholy. And in an unusual move, the poet analyzes his melancholy. In so doing, Tasso distinguishes between two forms of melancholy, melancholy *per infermità* or based on an accidental illness in an otherwise healthy self and melancholy *per natura* as the essential condition of a certain kind of self. The outburst of melancholia as disease, as a sudden but extreme form of mental alienation can be seen in such figures as Pentheus and Orestes. The gifted, innate form of melancholia, also known as divine furor, can be brought to the surface by love or by Bacchus. Tasso says that although he does not recognize his own melancholic madness in the figures of Pentheus or of Orestes, he nevertheless does not deny his being mad. He proposes that *his* melancholia, this new form of madness, which is peculiarly his own (at least in his mind), has other sources. Perhaps it is, as he says, a "soverchia maninconia,"⁶ a surplus of melancholy: "Ma perché di niun fatto simile a quelli d'Oreste o di Penteo sono consapevole a me stesso, come ch'io non nieghi d'esser folle, mi giova almeno di credere che questa nova pazzia abbia altra cagione. Forse è soverchia maninconia" [But since I am in no way conscious of being similar [in madness] to Orestes' or Pentheus', just as I do not deny my being mad, it behooves me at least to believe that this new

madness has other reasons. Perhaps it is a surplus of melancholy.] (18). This self-conscious discourse about his melancholy discloses the nature of what is at stake: one's self-representation as melancholic, as therefore in a state of mental alienation yet within this state still able to reason, to discourse on the epistemological problems associated with a subjectivism whose only source of affirmation comes from a mirrored dialogue with an Ideal, with the motivating force which drives his eros onto the scene of knowledge.

Saying that he suffers from both melancholy as illness and melancholy as divine inspiration and even more so from a "soverchia maninconia," the poet is led to describe through a certain analogy the problems associated with this excess: namely, persistent doubt and what we will come to understand as being a defensive splitting of the ego. The analogy is with the mythological creature of the Hydra. Tasso says that melancholy resembles a Hydra more than a chimera because, says the poet, as soon as one of the melancholic's thoughts is truncated, *tronco un pensiero*, two are suddenly born in its place (che due ne sono subito nati in quella vece [19]). Certainly, this image of the Hydra cannot help but remind us of Freud's Medusa's head, the mythological symbol which Freud associates to the fear of castration and to a general misogyny: not only does truncation obviously recall castration, but as Freud points out, the "multiplication of penis symbols" such as found in the Medusa's serpentine hairs or, for that matter, in the Hydra's many heads, also signifies castration "for they replace the penis the absence of which is the cause of the horror."⁷ As such, the Hydra, like the Medusa's head, can be read as a representation, to quote Freud once more, "of woman as a being who frightens and repels because she is castrated" (18: 274). As we know from Hesiod, the Medusa and the Hydra are related. Keto, the mother of the Medusa, also bore the serpent goddess Echidna, the mother of the Hydra, who was, in turn, nurtured by that most threatening of god-mothers, Hera (*Theogony* 270–313). Both the Medusa and the Hydra are misogynist representations of women which ward off the threat of sexual difference through a (male) logic of identity wherein what is not same is represented as utterly and horrendously different.

Hence, the Messenger who visits Tasso not surprisingly resembles his own projected, idealized self, framed within a context of divine Love and inspiration, a context whereby eros and desire for another are suppressed by a divine madness which excludes alterity while at the same time appropriating a feminization to the extent that the poet posits himself in bed as the recipient of the *Logos*. It is, thus, not surprising that within such a framework, the Hydra comes to represent the subject's own fears of castration, namely the recognition of his finitude and inscribed limitations within a pre-existing symbolic order. Thus Tasso's metaphor of the Hydra for the melancholic's excess of thought not only signifies a denial or turning away from the recognition of one's communality with women as, for example, in the experience of disempowerment, but it also mobilizes what Freud calls an "apotropaic act"

(18: 274) such that the fact of sexual difference is denied even as the fear of that difference, castration, is taking in as a symptom so that the ego can subsequently divest itself of the fear. The Hydra thus functions in the same way as the melancholic because each time a thought has been "truncated," or a loss mourned for, the loss is then doubled or two mournful thoughts are born in the place of one. This ferocious brand of melancholy, *soverchia maninconia*, turns the work of mourning into a perpetual labor, a more-than-Herculean task, one whose excessive—or rather infinite—production of its own loss comes to define the ego precisely in terms of its loss as the condition of its selfhood: a self forever mourning the loss of its own self.

The gap left by the truncated thought can be seen to be filled in, though, by the production of an imaginary system such as the ensuing, long discourse on demonology, which mobilizes late Renaissance notions of "sympathy" and mutual attraction in an attempt to explain away all sorts of phenomena which remain inexplicable within the framework of current "scientific" thought. Chief among these explanatory devices, the "horror vacuus," imputed to nature by the Aristotelian tradition and appropriated here by Tasso,⁸ is merely the replication on the level of theory of the subject's more primordial fear of that void which is the unknown, but which is also decipherable within the context of western male philosophy as the fear of castration and of woman.

The relation between castration anxiety and melancholia can be found elsewhere in Tasso. For instance, in the celebrated twelfth and thirteenth cantos of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, we find another scene where truncation is at issue within a context of mourning. Tancredi has betrayed the woman he loves by unwittingly killing her in a duel which moves like an erotic and macabre dance and within which Thanatos conquers.

Tre volte il cavalier la donna stringe
con le robuste braccia, ed altrettante
da que' nodi tenaci ella si scinge,
nodi di fer nemico e non d'amante.
Tornano al ferro, e l'uno e l'altro il tinge
con molte piaghe; e stanco ed anelante
e questi e quegli al fin pur si ritira,
e dopo lungo faticar respira. (12.57)

[Three time his strong arms clasp around her, as she, each time, loosens herself from those tenacious knots, bonds of a ferocious enemy and not of a lover. They take up their swords again and color them with the blood of many wounds, until weak and breathless, they both retire after their long labor to breathe again.]

Too late, the Christian Tancredi realizes that his opponent was his beloved, the pagan warrior-maiden Clorinda:

Ma ecco omai l'ora fatale è giunta

che 'l viver di Clorinda al suo fin deve.
 Spinge egli il ferro nel bel sen di punta
 che vi s'immerge e 'l sangue avido beve;
 e la veste, che d'or vago trapunta
 le mammelle stringea tenera e leve,
 l'empie d'un caldo fiume. Ella già sente
 morirsi, e 'l piè le manca egro e languente. (12.64)

[But now, alas!, the fatal hour arrives that Clorinda's life must come to its end. Deep into her lovely bosom he drives the point of his sword which sinks and avidly drinks her blood and her gold embroidered vest that tenderly and lightly clapses her breast, hotly swells with it. She already feels herself dying, and her foot gives way, weak and languid.]

The tragedy of this death scene lies, on one level, on the necessity of her death, *che 'l viver di Clorinda al suo fin deve*. On another level, the tragedy is explained by the fact that Tancredi was unable to recognize Clorinda, since we already know from a previous canto that Clorinda went out to fight without her usual armor. The guilt which Tancredi experiences at her death-murder is fraught with this "error" of misrecognition and also with the inevitability of the event. In the following Canto, we see the eventual demise that this event has upon Tancredi's ability to act, namely to act according to his duty as a soldier and to cut down the cypress tree which would free the enchanted forest of its incantation.

In these two cantos, we read the necessity of immobilizing the threatening powers of Clorinda's amazonian femininity. She needs to be rendered powerless, for her prowess, here represented as pagan, unfeminine and virulent, must yield to an orthodoxy of Christian beauty. As we have seen in canto 12, Clorinda's aggressivity (which we have already understood to be the fruit of her upbringing) is sundered through her death by a beloved from whom she receives baptism. She, thus, becomes accordingly redeemed through the Christian rite which renders her benign and "feminine" by locking her up and away into a beautiful, Christian heaven. In other words, her murder is somehow absolved by virtue of her being now reborn, through baptism, into a state of unworldly happiness and peace (12.68). She has become gentle and gentrified. What is then supposed to happen but doesn't, as we shall see, is to allow Tancredi the possibility to be the hero of the Christian mission, the conquest of Jerusalem, by cutting down the cypress tree. The sadism implicit in the murder of Clorinda as well as in the desire to conquer Jerusalem, the city of Christ, from the infidels is never really an issue in the *Gerusalemme*. If there are any casualties to this over-riding presumption, it might be read in Tancredi himself. For in Canto 13, Tancredi pays dearly for Clorinda's death precisely by his incapacity to *cut* the tree, an act which would free the forest of its evil incantation so that war machines, made out of the forest's trees, could be manufactured in the name of Christian victory over Jerusalem.

Certainly Tasso, as the epic narrator, is aware of the price extorted by such blatant acts of aggression. For Tasso represents, in the figure of Tancredi, the merciless fixation of a subject caught between word and deed, between representation and experience. Tancredi cannot cut the cypress upon which are inscribed the "evil" words of the magician Ismeno:

O tu che dentro a i chiostri de la morte
osasti por, guerriero audace, il piede,
deh! se non sei crudel quanto sei forte,
deh! non turbar questa secreta sede. (13.39)

[O you, audacious warrior, who dared set foot into death's cloister, Woe! if you are not as cruel as you are strong, Woe! do not disturb this secret place.]

Briefly, the inscription reads: let the dead rest in peace. How strange it seems that these words should be the words of the evil sorcerer. When cut, the tree begins to bleed, and we cannot help but remember the previous canto where the sword drank in the blood that killed Clorinda: "e 'l sangue avido beve." At this moment and in a Dantesque vein,⁹ her voice ushers forth and pleads with him not to cut down the tree since she is literally embodied within it:

Clorinda fui: né sol qui spirto umano
albergo in questa pianta rozza e dura,
ma ciascun altro ancor, franco o pagano,
che lassi i membri a piè de l'alte mura,
astretto è qui da novo incanto e strano,
non so s'io dica in corpo o in sepoltura.
Son di sensi animati i rami e i tronchi,
e micidial sei tu, se legno tronchi. (13.43; my emphasis)

[I was Clorinda: yet not the only one of human spirit who lives within this crude and hard plant, but others still, Christian or Pagan [who] leave their members at the foot of the tall walls, are confined here by new and strange spells [and] I do not know if embodied or entombed. The branches and trunks are alive with sensation, *and a murderer are you, if you cut a limb.*]

The last lines state: and you are a murderer if you cut, *tronchi*, the wood. Though Tancredi has been forewarned of the forest's enchantment, he still cannot help but act as if those sounds really were the sounds of Clorinda's voice. The mimicking of Clorinda's voice thus closes this scene of eerie seduction by the so-called forces of evil in a way which leaves Tancredi powerless and transfixed. Once again, a disembodied voice exerts a powerful seduction over a listener, anxious to misrecognize fiction as fact, illusion as reality, or otherwise put, readily willing to believe in ghosts. It is because of this incapacity to act in face of such simulacra, that Tancredi has been heralded as *the* melancholic character of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, *per eccellenza*.¹⁰ In the following *canti*, Tancredi comes to symbolize the melancholic who is transfixed because of his literal incapacity to *cut his losses*, to

curtail the incremental momentum of his brooding thoughts, and he thereby reaffirms the motif of the melancholic's hydra in *Il Messaggiero*: "tronco un pensiero che due ne sono subito nati in quella vece" (19).

For the false Clorinda, here inextricably bound up within the tree, acts like the Hydra to produce an infinite repetition of loss and mourning as the sign of the suffering beloved. Yet both Clorinda's auditory image, and its emanation from within the phallic symbol of the cypress tree point also to woman as other within Tasso's epistemological and moral system.¹¹ Perhaps the difference between the "true" or beatified Clorinda up in heaven and the "false" one induced by the sorcerer's ventriloquism should be read as a splitting of the representation of woman into good and bad objects. The "good" non-other Clorinda is made into a safe, non-sensual, necrophilic love object, relieved of her womanly experience. The "false" Clorinda is woman as Other, is like the Hydra herself: an enigmatic source of horror which castrates the male by virtue of "her" assault on his consciousness, by virtue of the ever-insisting character of her difference, which ceaselessly *re*-marks itself even in its denial. The "appagamento" of this act of hubris is that woman continues to haunt the (male) subject as a fearful, phantasmatic gap within that all-inclusive system, the one that sees her as Other and wants to render this strangeness benign.¹² In some way, the "horror vacuus" is really a metaphor for a repressed aggressivity towards the feminine, as the male subject—particularly the male poet who attributes to himself the aura of privileged suffering—attempts to make of that repression the expression and appropriation of his eros: the eros of constant lack. The totalizing empowerment of a discourse based on such aggressivity, fueled by the desire to reduce difference and legitimated by an ethos of aesthetic victimization persists throughout the reworkings of Tasso's major epic under the guise of a Christian ideology which sets out to hegemonize and homogenize Jerusalem, the topographical equivalent of the female other as that which must not only be *Liberata* (in the epic's title of 1575) but also and more definitively *Conquistata* (in the title of the revised epic of 1593).

Within the apotropaic workings of such imaginary systems as demonology or the ideology of the Church militant, that is, in systems reactively defined by the "horror vacuus," we read the self-doubts to which the melancholic is subject precisely because of his inability to accept castration, to recognize the limits that define him, paradoxically framed by his continuous need to assuage that doubt, which remains as the telltale sign of the castration that would be denied. The paradox of this logic, as in the case of the Hydra, is that the more the poet attempts to assuage his doubts, the more he is driven into doubt and the more, therefore, he needs to build certitude according to the logic of identity foregrounded, for instance, by *Il Messaggiero*'s epistemological content. Mirroring the analogy of the melancholic's multiplicity of thoughts as similar to the Hydra, however, and refracting the melancholic's constitutive loss of self is a certain fragmentation of the body, whose parts then become

available for fetichization. What is therefore at stake in the disembodied voice, ear, or tongue is the double function of condensing the fear of death and castration into a denial of it while privileging it as that which represents the embodiment of the ego's self-presence. It thereby engenders a psychosis of elite difference and thus of sameness.

Let us consider that, by *soverchia maninconia*, the poet is unconsciously representing in an economic framework, the excess of narcissistic libido partially dammed up through the repression constituted by a model of purity and sacredness, while it (the mechanism of demand from an external absolute model) is also redirecting the overflow of narcissistic libido into a discourse which would exclude alterity. It leaves open an avenue for the *vis imaginativa*, conditioned by a western metaphysics of immanence, to imagine self in the likeness of a higher being. Therefore, the melancholic proceeds to a double appropriation of incorporation. On the one hand, the melancholic appropriates a feminine position by making of himself the exclusive subject of difference through metaphors of birth and receptivity, which are simultaneously corporeal and non-corporeal. On the other hand, he engenders a fetichized model of the body which both points to the subject's rejection of the female body which stands for corruptibility and limitation, and to his desire to replace it with a preferred body, the body of the text, of disembodied words which inaugurate the aura of his mo(u)rning fantasy and signify his privileged relation, as poet, with the divine.

For Tasso, the ear, the gap which receives the voice—the disembodied voice of the Messenger—which needs a tongue, the poet's tongue, is transcribed and transmitted as text, the text of *Il Messaggiero*. The text represents the tongue of the poet, the phallic material which attests to the reality of his vision. This vision, thus, reveals itself to be a sort of intra-subjective copulation, the only eros available to the subject within such a self-enclosed system. This system, dependent upon its intra-corporality (the ear and the tongue), attempts to presence the impossible, Tasso's eros, by being at the service of an impossible union, a union of sexuality and *anima*, and which can, therefore, only be represented by the *Logos*. But in this case, *Logos* as Eros belongs only to a privileged few. As the Messenger says: "fra alcuni è una segreta conformità di natura non conosciuta da molti, la quale altro non è che amore" (p. 26). [Amongst a few there exists a secret conformity of nature, not known by many, which is Love]. The ear receives this message of love from the messenger. Furthermore, speaking through the ear recalls the poet's amatory sonnets wherein he is stricken by love for his lady through the ear.¹³ Here, as in his sonnets, the power of love's seduction through the ear, signals its difference from the traditional *topos* of being love stricken through the eyes, since this aural mark of enamourment has primacy over the eyes. In the *Messaggiero*, Tasso wants to see the voice which *first* he *hears* and which beckons to him. This auditory insemination reveals a further displacement from any poetic relation with the fictional beloved woman as

the narcissistic mirror of poetic inspiration, and appropriates, in her place, the "conformità di natura," like unto like. Furthermore, the aural and oral dialectic marks this poet as the privileged receiver of sound, a medium which in the appropriately poetic form of music has often been considered a cure for the troubled ear, as a cure for melancholy. We need only think of the biblical figure Saul whose own brooding spirit was pacified through melody. Such an *écoute* points back to the text we are reading as the talking which is to cure what is talked about. The text would seem to stage the cure for melancholia through a dialogue wherein transference can nonetheless never be any more than its own projected fantasy. What is therefore textualized and what is read is nothing more than an idealized discourse, that is, a discourse which takes its strength from an ideal dialogue between the subject, Tasso, and his own version of his own projected self-idealization, that spirit of love, the *Messaggero*. What seems to be Other and radically Other because of its unworldly character betrays its characterization as Non-Other through its epistemological and rhetorical bent: the *conformità di natura*.

In other words, transference which might produce dialogically at least some aspect of conflict or minimally some affective change evolving from conflictual projection is trammelled up by the inflexibility of the poet's ideal self mirrored onto the spirit's imaginary, the fictional dialogic other who represents the *exemplum* of the poet's mythological self-production. The function of the *Messaggero* is to mirror the telos of the subject's desire for absolute certainty and thus of unquestionable self-presence. Consequently, doubt is only a textual strategy which functions as the catalyst to produce a text based on consenting speakers. Nevertheless, doubt functions not only to produce *ad infinitum* a textual reconstruction of the self, a self engendered by the production of loss, but doubt also functions as the catalyst for the appropriation of a space for the melancholic who then paradoxically remains transfixed in his non-transferential incapacity to cut his losses, in the trans-fiction of his loss as the condition of selfhood. The dialogue, through the weapons of reason, of epistemological veracity, thus works to build its defense by using verbalism as the talking cure, and accordingly attempts to make of this deliria the ideal which necessarily turns back on itself because it requires, in order to survive, the need for lack to motivate its fictionality. Female analogues, Clorinda and Hydra, for example, function to threaten this production of loss by endorsing in their Otherness, the fulfillment of transference proper since their very existence presents an Other experience, one through which models of alterity announce their seductions by virtue of a confrontation between sameness and difference. The Hydra's many heads represent, on one level, fullness, the phallus multiplied, and paradoxically, on the other hand, they represent Otherness, the monstrosity that points to the horror of lack, otherwise codified as that which remains radically unknown, the terrifying sign of radical difference: Jerusalem, the pagan city, the phantom body of the Other. The melancholic would, thus, seem to mourn the loss of that whose

presence he would fear. Tasso's attempt at self-diagnosis can do no more than reproduce that which it points to, that is, do no more than foreground itself as the *case* of Tasso the mad poet.

So, in offering himself as the subject of a clinical investigation and cure through the magic of dialogue, could Tasso in his mo(u)rning fantasy not be said to situate himself at the dawn of psychoanalysis, at the inception of an eminently modern form of subjectivity? Perhaps it would be more accurate to say the "horizon" of psychoanalysis, for with Tasso as the subject of melancholia, in a gendered myth legitimating that neurosis, we read the symptoms of a specifically male subjectivity that characterizes itself through the production of loss. The melancholic model, therefore, can be understood not simply as the incorporation of a lost object of desire, but rather as the incorporation of loss which needs to be endlessly reproduced *as loss* to sustain its myth. In other words, an interpretation of melancholia ought not to be reduced to simply discovering lost objects of desire but, ought, rather, to show how the lost object, itself mythologized, mirrors the subject's desire. By privileging an ideal through absence and deferral, the self not only reconverts the loss into its own self-display (which Freud well understood) but also legitimates its display as part of a cultural myth. Freud himself can be said to participate, whether consciously or unconsciously, within this myth. For when discussing the relation between mourning and melancholia, he refers to such nameless but gender-specific categories as the "deserted bride" or the self-deprecating wife (14: 245, 248). But then, elsewhere in the same piece, he refers to Hamlet (14: 246), signaling the fact that a well-known *male* character such as Hamlet is indeed a nameable subject, and a subject of literary and psychoanalytic interest precisely because the canon legitimizes his "neurosis" as something, or ironizes it as the experience of nothing. The clinical opposition between the banality of mourning and the neurotic but culturally more prestigious (if not romanticized) category of melancholia is hence commanded by a gender opposition, which while certainly not precluding the concrete existences of male mourners or melancholic women, works to maintain the peculiarly privileged artistic and literary status granted the *homo melancholicus*, since at least the time when Torquato Tasso gleaned his laureate.

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NOTES

- 1 On the relationship between the two disciplines, an introductory sampling of the issues can be found in de Certeau and in the various collections edited by Bal, Felman, and Meltzer.
- 2 Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl 250; Ficino's discussion of this 'divine frenzy' can be found in his *Commentarium in Phedrum*, the most pertinent passages being found in chapter 4, "*De furore poetico ceterisque furoribus et eorum ordine, coniunctione, utilitate*" (83–87). Wittkower and Wittkower also provide an invaluable service in tracing the historical influences

- of classical texts on Renaissance notions of madness and melancholy and their particular promulgation through Ficino's rereadings of Plato and Aristotle.
- 3 For the standard biographical information on Tasso's persecutory fantasies, Angelo Solerti's *Vita di Torquato Tasso* remains unsurpassed.
 - 4 The demonstration of this lineage is an ongoing project of which this article represents a small part.
 - 5 All translations are my own.
 - 6 *Maninconia* is an old form for the modern Italian *malinconia*, an alternative spelling for melancholia. Interestingly enough, a still common though archaic expression for a mental hospital is *manicomio*. In addition to betraying a primitive association between melancholia and mania (which, as Freud argues in "Mourning and Melancholia" [14: 254–258] is merely the flip side of melancholic mourning), the proximity of these words on the level of the signifier also underscores the institutional connection between the invention of the asylum and the representation of melancholia as an exemplary and privileged form of madness.
 - 7 Freud, "Medusa's Head," (18: 273–274); Cf. Hertz, Cixous, Spackman, as well as de Lauretis, who argues that to see the Medusa "straight on" [as Cixous does] "is not a simple matter for women or for men" (135). What is at stake for de Lauretis is that "the relation of female subjectivity to ideology" bear upon the real and the historical in such a way that the political issue of femininity, that is the context of women and the representation of women, is greater than "a politics of the unconscious" (136).
 - 8 In *Il Messaggero*, while discussing the phenomena of sympathies and attractions, the spirit says that nature "herself" fearing to perish because of nature's relationship with the void, calls to 'her' aid, air, which is a body and thus fills 'herself' up so that 'she' does not fear to perish: *si riempie in modo ch'ella non teme di perire* (26).
 - 9 Cf. *Inferno* 13.22ff; also see Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where Tancredi at the cypress tree is described as "the most moving poetic picture" governed by the "compulsion to repeat which overrides the pleasure principle" (18: 22).
 - 10 Cf. Petrocchi, Getto, Basile 293–308, and Ferguson, 123–128.
 - 11 Migiel argues that "Tancredi turns as if to stone, upon seeing Clorinda, suggesting that Clorinda is a figure around whom are concentrated many of the horrifying and reassuring feelings about masculinity and femininity excited by the vision of the Medusa herself." Thus, Clorinda and the Hydra can be said to represent the condensation of castration anxiety (or what Freud calls an apotropaic defensive screen) provoked by the sight of by the imagination that such a sight offers to the hero caught within the fiction of Oedipal narrative.
 - 12 Jane Gallop even defines feminism as "the defense and validation of such monsters" (172). On the transformation of monsters as misogynist depictions of the feminine into positive representations of woman, see Cixous, who states that "you only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she is not deadly. She is beautiful and she's laughing" (255); Cf. de Lauretis 135–136 and Spackman, who argues, on the other hand, that to side either with the enchantress or the "hag" is to remain within an opposition between essence and appearance that perpetuates the notion that truth is ungended.
 - 13 Eg. *Rime* (3: Parte Prima, Sonnets 1 and 2). In Sonnet One, we read: "Quando m'apparve donna assai simile / *ne la sua voce* a candida angetta" (lines 5–6; my emphasis). In Sonnet Two, the aural motif becomes even more pronounced: "ma del rischio minor tardi m'accorsi / *che mi fu per le orecchie il cor ferito* / e i detti andaro ove non giunse il volto" (lines 12–14; my emphasis). Tasso, by defining his poetic inspiration as an effect of his beloved's *voice*, significantly revises the traditional love lyric which had found its pretext in the visual, in the inaugural gaze exchanged between lovers. In this way, it becomes other than Petrarchan even if homage is still paid to his literary father. In Tasso's lyric, thus, the focus of sensuality has been shifted from the addresses of his love poems, Peperara and Bendidio, and onto the words themselves. The inseminating power of words replaces that of the gaze as Tasso privileges and eroticizes the Logos. As Norman O. Brown notes, speech was "resexualized"

as a means of "overcoming the consequences of the fall. The tongue was the first unruly member. Displacement is first from above downwards; the penis is a symbolic tongue, and disturbances of ejaculation a kind of genital stuttering" (251).

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Svevo and the Ironic Conscience of the Novel

“si vedono meno bene le cose quando si spalancano troppo gli occhi”¹

Beryl De Zoete's English translation of Svevo's third novel *La Coscienza di Zeno* as *The Confessions of Zeno*, is symptomatic of a major misunderstanding in what this novel is supposedly about. Whereas the original title places the stress of “coscienza” (conscience, awareness) the English translation privileges the confessional and diary-like form of the novel. In one sense De Zoete is correct because the two meanings can be said to converge in that Zeno's “coscienza” is confessed in the diary which is the novel. This convergence, however, is only apparent because the privileging of the confessional aspect of the novel not only underplays the awareness but also displaces it. “Confession” can also denote lack of awareness because in a confession the appeal is to someone else's “coscienza.” To someone like an analyst, for example, capable of understanding what one cannot himself understand. De Zoete's emphasis on confession presupposes already a psychoanalytical reading of the novel or, simply, that the psychoanalytical is the dominant theme of the novel. Zeno's remark, “Ricordo tutto, ma non intendo niente” (“I remember everything, but I don't understand anything,” 623), is apropos. It can easily be read as a statement that cries out for an analyst to interpret and understand.² The reader-critic has no choice but to take the place of Zeno's analyst, Doctor S., and subject the novel to psycho-analysis.³

“Coscienza,” however, can also allude to a type of awareness that need not necessarily be identified with Zeno, the blundering, inept protagonist of the novel. As every reader of the novel knows, the text often functions independently and despite Zeno Cosini's received ideas of the world around him. When Zeno's actions are prompted by his desire to be and do what is naturally beyond the range of his possibilities, things always turn out to be the opposite of what he thinks to be the case. In this ironic framework, Zeno is always the first victim of his pronouncements. His “coscienza” is always the result of an ironic predicament. The knowledge, in other words, that what we call “reality” is always different from what it initially appeared us to be. Within this context, the statement “Ricordo tutto, ma non intendo niente” instead of signifying the condition of a divided self, could be taken as a statement on the precariousness of self-understanding that puts even psychoanalytical understanding into question.

One way to get to the heart of the problem is to inquire why the protagonist of the novel is called “Zeno” or, which is the same, which philosopher is Zeno

said to resemble. "Alberta citò un filosofo antico che doveva somigliarmi nell'interpretazione della vita . . ." ("Alberta quoted an ancient philosopher whose view of life was rather like mine. . . ," 662). The philosopher, as some critics have suggested, is Zeno of Elea who set out, paradoxically, to demonstrate the impossibility of motion.⁴ In one of his most famous proofs, he claimed that Achilles, the fastest runner of the Greek world, could not win a race against a tortoise. He argued that by the time Achilles caught up with the tortoise at a point A, the tortoise will have reached a point B. When Achilles covers the distance AB, the tortoise will have reached a point C, and so on to infinity. If we put aside for a moment the philosophical reasons behind Zeno of Elea's example, namely that it was meant to prove Parmenides' concept of plurality, the importance of the paradox for us is in the way it undermines our common expectations which dictate that anyone, and not just Achilles, is faster than a tortoise. Zeno of Elea chooses on purpose the fastest man and the slowest animal to demonstrate, instead, that our sense of perception is not to be trusted. Svevo, I would like to suggest, names his protagonist "Zeno" for similar reasons and in order to draw the reader's attention to a mode of representation which is patterned on the philosopher's method of proof. An indirect allusion to this method is made in an episode which explicitly parodies the Eleatic paradox.

Tullio s'era rimesso a parlare della sua malattia ch'era anche la sua principale distrazione. Aveva studiato l'anatomia della gamba e del piede. Mi raccontò ridendo che quando si cammina con passo rapido, il tempo in cui si svolge un passo non supera il mezzo secondo e che in quel mezzo secondo si muovevano nientemeno che cinquantaquattro muscoli. Trasecolai e subito corsi col pensiero alle mie gambe a cercarvi la macchina mostruosa. Io credo di averla trovata. Naturalmente non riscontrai cinquantaquattro ordigni, ma *una complicazione enorme che perdette il suo ordine dacché io vi ficcai la mia attenzione*. Uscii da quel caffè zoppicando e per alcuni giorni zoppicai sempre. Il camminare era per me divenuto un lavoro pesante, e anche lievemente doloroso. A quel groviglio di congegni pareva mancasse ormai l'olio e che, muovendosi, si ledessero a vicenda. Pochi giorni appresso, fui colto da un male più grave di cui dirò e che diminuì il primo. Ma ancora oggidì, che ne scrivo, se qualcuno mi guarda quando mi muovo, i cinquantaquattro movimenti s'imbarazzano ed io sono in procinto di cadere.

[Tullio and I began talking about his illness, which was his principal distraction. He had studied the anatomy of the leg and foot. He told me with amusement that when one is walking rapidly each step takes no more than half a second, and in that half second no fewer than fifty-four muscles are set in motion. I listened in bewilderment. I at once directed my attention to my legs and tried to discover the infernal machine. I thought I had succeeded in finding it. I could not of course distinguish all its fifty-four parts, but I discovered *something terribly complicated which seemed to lose its order as soon as I began paying attention to it*. I limped as I left the café and for several days afterwards. Walking had become a burden to me and even caused me a certain amount of pain. I felt as if that mass of muscles needed oiling and that in moving

they would get damaged. A few days later I was struck by a greater calamity, which I will relate later, and which diminished the first one. But even today, if anyone watches me walking, the fifty-four movements get tied up in a knot, and I feel like falling. (682–83, italics mine)]

The key word of the passage is “attention,” which is another way of saying “coscienza” (“awareness”). Zeno in becoming aware of what lies behind the appearances of things disrupts their apparent order and reveals the hidden “macchina mostruosa,” namely a knowledge, that differs from our common, complacent way of looking at the world and that is no longer reassuring. Just as Zeno limps, or is about to fall, as the result of his “attenzione,” this knowledge of what actually lies behind the apparent order and logic of things makes it increasingly difficult forever after to live comfortably in the world. We shall return to the more pessimistic implications of Svevo’s “coscienza” that shape the ending of the novel, for the moment we would like to identify this paradoxical approach with the ironic conscience of the novel which subverts in its wake man’s mystified relation to the world.⁵ In the novel the “attention” is focussed on man’s delusions of self-importance (Zeno’s last cigarette), on the institutions of family, marriage and business and most of all, on the pretense of psychoanalysis, a science that was gaining popularity at the time Svevo was writing, to solve the problem of man.⁶ This preoccupation reflects the novel’s structure which is not that of a traditional novel, as Svevo’s earlier novels may be said to be, but consists of a series of paradoxes or ironic demystifications of order held together by the single ironic perspective of the author.

In the chapter “Il Fumo” (“Smoking”), Zeno’s futile efforts to quit smoking are a parody of man’s desire for change and self-improvement that are destined to come to nought. With his resolve to stop smoking, Zeno hopes to become the strong and ideal man he has always wanted to be. “Chissà se cessando di fumare io sarei divenuto l’uomo ideale e forte che m’aspettavo?” (“Who knows if by not smoking I would have become the strong and ideal man I wanted to be?” 606). Of course, the point of the chapter is to expose the deluded notion that such a change can occur and that the weak-willed Zeno can emerge a new man. Svevo parodies the traditional autobiographical novel, whose central theme is the self and its transformations, by reversing the relationship between the unique, meaningful event in the life of the self and the date that records it. In the novel it is the date that suggest the possibility of change.

Del secolo passato ricordo una data che mi parve dovesse sigillare per sempre la bara in cui volevo mettere il mio vizio: “Nono giorno del nono mese del 1899.” *Significativa davvero?* Il secolo nuovo m’apportò delle date ben altrimenti musicali: “Primo giorno del primo mese del 1901.” Ancora mi pare che se quella data potesse ripetersi, io saprei iniziare *una nuova vita*.

[I remember a date from the last century which seemed to mark forever the end of my vice: "Ninth day of the ninth month of 1899." *Meaningful, wouldn't you say!* The new century provided me with other dates equally musical. "First day of the first month of 1901." If that date could repeat itself I could begin *a new life*. (607, italics mine)]

The date acquires meaning not through the act willed but by the inner coherence and musicality of the numbers that go to make up the date. In so doing Svevo draws attention to the date as a literary device as well as to the fiction of "una nuova vita" ("a new life"), an indirect allusion to that model of all fictional autobiographies, Dante's *Vita Nuova*. *La coscienza di Zeno*, however, is a parody of the genre, an anti-autobiographical novel, not because the others are fictional and Svevo's novel is not. What is put into question by the parody is the fiction of a self caught in the illusion of temporality that makes the self believe in the possibility of change, that it can be other than it is. When this deluded view is overcome in the old Zeno who writes the diary for the confessions, the acceptance of his smoking habit corresponds to the acceptance that time does not change but always repeats itself. "Eppoi il Tempo, per me, non è quella cosa impensabile che non s'arresta mai. Da me, solo da me, ritorna" ("And anyway time for me is not that unimaginable thing that never stops. It always comes back to me, only to me," 607). In Eleatic fashion, for the "cured" Zeno time is motionless. Just as Achilles will never triumph over the tortoise, Zeno will never be the man he aspires to be. He is condemned to always be the weakling he knows himself to be. Ironically, however, it is this knowledge that for Svevo defines true health which he understands, paradoxically, as the awareness of being sick. "La miglior prova ch'io non ho avuta quella malattia risulta dal fatto che non ne sono guarito" ("The best proof that I have never had that illness is clear from the fact that I am not cured," 928). Health, in other words, is achieved through an awareness of the mystifications to which the self is subject in time. Health is the result of an attention, an ironic conscience, that undermines the self's mystifications by arresting once and for all, in eleatic fashion, the temporality that made it possible. Yet this ironic demystification is for Svevo only a temporary remedy. We shall return later to what he believes to be the remedy for man for all time.

In the chapters that follow, "La storia del mio matrimonio" ("The story of my marriage"), "La Moglie e l'Amante" ("Wife and Mistress") and "Storia di un'associazione commerciale" ("A Business Partnership"), Zeno's 'attention' is directed at subverting examples of "health" and "strength" that he identifies with those around him: his own father, the father-in-law Malfenti, Ada and Guido. In typical ironic fashion Zeno's first impression of these characters couldn't be further from the truth. The old Malfenti, whom Zeno believes to be a paragon of health, dies soon after. Augusta, the ugly sister that Zeno discards as a possible mate, turns out to be the one he marries and the best catch. The beautiful Ada that Zeno pursues hopelessly later becomes sickly

and ugly when she contracts the "morbo di Basedow" ("Basedow's disease"). Guido, the paragon of strength and health in the novel, the strong and ideal man that Ada prefers to Zeno, turns out to be an unfaithful husband, inept in business and a despicable weakling who has to resort to feigning suicide to force his wife to help him financially. He dies foolishly when his pretended suicide is not discovered in time.

Zeno's "fortune" undergoes similar changes. From being thought crazy and irresponsible he becomes respected and appreciated. From being completely inept at conducting business affairs he pulls off a crucial business deal on the stock market making a large profit. Ada who at first dislikes him and rejects him later loves him. Appearances, in other words, always prove to be deceptive and the fortune of the characters change radically to disprove Zeno's first impressions. As Zeno says of himself, he is "un buon osservatore ma un buon osservatore alquanto cieco" ("a good observer but somewhat blind," 657). The wheel of fortune, however, is never stable and if Zeno is now appreciated by his family for reasons not his own he is just as quickly put down for no reason. Ada eventually rejects Zeno accusing him unjustly of having hated Guido and of having made his death seem futile with his winnings on the stock market. Ada's false accusations have also a deeper meaning. They represent a moment in the novel which is irreversible and fixed. Soon after Ada leaves to join Guido's family in Buenos Aires never to return again, her departure from the novel deprives Zeno of the opportunity to justify his conduct and to prove her his innocence. "Ecco ch'essa ci abbandonava e che mai più avrei potuto provarle *la mia innocenza*" ("Now that she was leaving us I could no longer prove her *my innocence*," 926, italics mine). As far as the relationship with Ada is concerned, time has once again stopped, freezing in time a false image of Zeno that he will never be able to erase. In Ada's eyes Zeno has lost his innocence forever.

The episode reiterates another, the death of Zeno's father, when Zeno is faced with a similar, irreversible experience. Zeno, following the doctor's advice makes sure that his sick, but restless father remains in bed but the father dies believing (or so Zeno thinks) that the son wants to keep him prisoner in bed. "Egli era morto ed io non potevo provargli *la mia innocenza*!" ("He was dead and I could not prove *my innocence*," 645, italics mine). As in Ada's case (similar examples are Ada's father's death and Guido's death), Zeno's father's death marks a fixed moment in time when change comes to a halt and Zeno is left in a predicament that he can no longer alter. The death or departure of these characters prevent Zeno from proving to them that he is not what they think he is thus making it impossible for him to prove his innocence. Their "disappearance" condemns Zeno to "illness," that is, to endure a false image of himself forever. This situation provides us with another version of the Eleatic paradox which, if it may seem absurd in the case of Achilles and the tortoise, in the case of Zeno Cosini, or of any man for that matter, is a simple fact of life. Characters and events are

implicated in a process where things are always the opposite of what they seem maintaining an illusion of health and change until the moment when death puts an end to both and freezes the tableau on a situation that never is what it says it is.⁷

The brunt of Svevo's critique, and of Zeno's irony, however, is directed at psychoanalysis and at the promise of health that Freud's theories seem to guarantee.⁸ The insistence of some critics to read the novel from the point of view of psychoanalysis and to ignore the critique that Svevo gives of this discipline as only the quirk of a deluded neurotic goes only to emphasize how strong the desire of health is in everyone of us. Nor can the apparent critique of psychoanalysis be attributed to Zeno's "antipatia" ("dislike") for his analyst, Dr. S. as the latter would like us to believe. "Chi di psicoanalisi s'intende sa dove piazzare l'antipatia che il paziente mi dedica" ("Anyone familiar with psychoanalysis will know to what to attribute my patient's hostility," 599). In Svevo's critique it is psychoanalysis's inability to discriminate between truth and lie which is in question. Svevo characterizes Doctor S. as a man who believes everything he reads forgetting that man lies easily. This is not to say that for Svevo man is a liar, but that very often, when words fail him, he says the first thing that comes to mind. Man speaks of one thing rather than another not because it may be important but because he easily forgets and says only the things for which he can find the words.

Il dottore presta una fede troppo grande anche a quelle mie benedette confessioni che non vuole restituirmi perché le riveda. Dio mio! Egli non studiò che la medicina e perciò ignora che cosa significhi scrivere in italiano per noi che parliamo e non sappiamo scrivere il dialetto. *Con ogni nostra parola toscana noi mentiamo! Se egli sapesse come raccontiamo con predilezione tutte le cose per le quali abbiamo pronta la frase e come evitiamo quelle che ci obbligherebbero di ricorrere al vocabolario! E' proprio così che scegliamo dalla nostra vita gli episodi da notarsi. Si capisce come la nostra vita avrebbe tutt'altro aspetto se fosse detta nel nostro dialetto.*

[The doctor attaches too much importance to those confessions of mine, which he refused to give back so that I may look at them again. My God! He has only studied medicine, and so he has no idea what it means for us who talk and write in dialect to write in Italian. *We lie with every word we speak in the Tuscan tongue! If he only knew how we like to talk about things for which we have ready the words, and how we avoid subjects which would oblige us to look up words in the dictionary! That is how we choose from our lives episodes of note.* Naturally our life would take on quite a different aspect if it were told in our dialect. (928, italics mine)]

The opposition "toscano"/"dialetto," very much apropos in the case of the Trieste born, german-speaking Italo Svevo/Ettore Schmitt, does not imply that if Zeno were to speak in his dialect he could tell the truth. The opposition emphasizes a difference between a universal language of communication common to everyone and a personal, original language, that alone is capable of expressing clearly and distinctly all of one's thoughts and feelings. The

latter, however, is a language not available to man. If Doctor S. had studied literature beside medicine he would have known this as he would have known better than to take everything as the literal truth. For the psychoanalyst, instead, Zeno's lies are facts that he believes reveal the truth of Zeno's past. "E il dottore registrava. Diceva 'Abbiamo avuto questo, abbiamo avuto quello'" ("The doctor noted everything. He would say 'We have had this, we have had that,'" 929). He ignores that the images recalled by Zeno are only graphic signs completely devoid of meaning, "In verità, noi non avevamo più che dei segni grafici, degli scheletri d'immagini" ("But really, we had nothing more than graphic signs, mere skeletons of images," 929).

In Svevo's version of psychoanalysis, the Oedipus complex is the problem that once recognized will provide the cure. Doctor S.'s efforts are geared toward identifying Zeno's dreams and confessions as his subconscious desire to love his mother and to kill his father. He is unaware, however, that Zeno is lying and making up stories just to please him. "Dimostravo così anche di aver capito perfettamente la malattia che il dottore esigea da me. Edipo infantile era fatto proprio così: succhiava il piede sinistro della madre per lasciare il destro al padre" ("I thereby showed that I had grasped perfectly the disease that the doctor demanded of me. The infant Oedipus was just like that: he sucked his mother's left foot leaving the right one to the father," 934), or, "per far piacere al dottor S. inventavo nuovi particolari della mia infanzia che dovevano confermare la diagnosi di Sofocle" ("to please Doctor S. I invented new details of my childhood in conformity with Sophocles' diagnosis," 938). When Zeno lacks good dreams that can satisfy Doctor S., he invents others that fulfill his psychoanalytical expectations. Of course to Doctor S., or to any analyst, it matters little whether Zeno is telling the truth or not. To them everything counts. Zeno *may think* he has invented that he sucked his mother's left foot but as Doctor S. points out in the preface to the book, Zeno does not know that even his lies can shed light on his illness. "Se sapesse quante sorprese potrebbero risultargli dal commento delle tante verità e bugie ch'egli ha qui accumulate!" ("If he only knew what surprises lie in store for him in the analyses of the many truths and falsehoods that he has compiled here," 599). Psychoanalysis and Doctor S.'s claims that Zeno has been cured because he has identified in the Oedipus complex the cause of his illness are shown by Svevo to be instead another way in which man persists in his self-deluded state or, in Svevo's metaphor, in his illusions of "health." Svevo parodies psychoanalytical practice by alluding to the "literary" origins of the Oedipus complex and by pointing out, indirectly, that whatever Sophocles may have known of "health" it did not save him from death.

La mia cura doveva essere finita perché la mia malattia era stata scoperta. *Non era altra che quella diagnosticata a suo tempo dal defunto Sofocle sul povero Edipo*: avevo amata mia madre e avrei voluto ammazzare mio padre.

[I ought to have been cured for he had found out what was the matter with me. *The*

diagnosis was exactly the same that dead Sophocles made on poor Oedipus: I had loved my mother and wanted to kill by father. (928, italics mine)]

As Sophocles never diagnosed Oedipus's problems as the Oedipus's complex, for "Sophocles," perhaps, we should read "Freud." Psychoanalysis, on the contrary, can be said to be symptomatic of man's real illness: his obsession with health. In one of the novel's key allegories, the episode of the fly, Svevo points to two basic errors in man's quest for health. The fly in question was bothering Zeno who in blowing it away damages one of its legs.

Era ferma, cretta e pareva più alta di prima perché una delle sue zampine era stata anchilosata e non poteva flettersi. Con le due zampine posteriori si lisciava assiduamente le ali. Tentò di muoversi, ma si ribaltò sulla schiena. Si rizzò e ritornò ostinata al suo assiduo lavoro.

[It (the fly) was standing right up, and seemed taller than before because one of its legs was paralysed by the blow and could not be bent. It was industriously cleaning its wings with its two hind legs. It tried to move, but fell over on its back. Then it picked itself up again and returned obstinately to its task. (683)]

The fly's efforts to overcome its debilitation lead Zeno to reflect on two errors in the insect's desperate attempts to return to normality.

Scrissi allora quei versi, stupito di aver scoperto che quel piccolo organismo pervaso da tanto dolore, fosse diretto nel suo sforzo immane da due errori: *prima di tutto lisciando con tanta ostinazione le ali che non erano lese, l'insetto rivelava di non sapere da quale organo venisse il suo dolore*; poi l'assiduità del suo sforzo dimostrava che c'era nella sua minuscola mente *la fede fondamentale che la salute spetti a tutti e che debba certamente ritornare quando ci ha lasciato*. Erano errori che si possono facilmente scusare in un insetto che non vive che la vita di una sola stagione, e non ha tempo di far dell'esperienza.

[I wrote those verses in my surprise at discovering that the fly's tiny, pain-racked organism was acting on two mistaken assumption. *First of all, in cleaning its wings so persistently the insect showed that it did not know which was the wounded limb*. Secondly, its persistent efforts showed that it *assumed health to be the right of everyone, and that though we have lost it we shall certainly find it again*. These errors are quite excusable in an insect which only lives for one season and has no time to learn from experience. (683, italics mine)]

This quotation leaves implied that if we can excuse a fly for thinking this way, we cannot excuse man who lives longer than a season and has ample time to reflect and learn from experience. The insect's two errors are that although it feels pain he ignores the origin of that pain and, second, that it regards health as something it is his by right. These are man's two major delusions. Man deludes himself when he thinks that he knows the origin of his illness and he can cure it and when he presumes that he has a right to health. Psychoanalysis is one way that these errors are perpetuated.

The proof that Svevo means the episode of the fly to signify the human condition and not that of the animal world becomes clear later in the novel where he contrasts the attitudes toward health in man and in the animal. In the case of the animal health is regained through the animal's innate ability to adapt to the demands of nature.

Qualunque sforzo di darci la salute è vano. Questa non può appartenere che alla bestia che conosce un solo progresso, quello del proprio organismo. Allorché la rondinella comprese che per essa non c'era altra possibile vita fuori dell'emigrazione, essa ingrossò il muscolo che muove le sue ali e che divenne la parte più considerevole del suo organismo. La talpa s'interro e tutto il suo corpo si conformò al suo bisogno. Il cavallo s'ingrandì e trasformò il suo piede. Di alcuni animali non sappiamo il progresso, ma ci sarà stato e non avrà mai leso la loro salute.

[*Every effort to procure health is in vain. Health can only belong to the animal, whose sole idea of progress is that of his own body. When the swallow realized that emigration was the only possible life for her, she enlarged the muscles which worked her wings, and which became by degrees the most important part of her body. The mole went underground, and its whole body adapted itself to the task. The horse grew bigger and changed the shape of his foot. We know nothing about the development of certain animals, but it must have existed, and can never have injured their health. (955, italics mine)*]

The animal never loses its health because when it ceases to function in the old established way, it adjusts. It tries to survive any way it can. The same cannot be said for man. Unlike the animal, man has not learned to adjust, on the contrary, he has tried to substitute himself to Nature forcing it to adjust to his ways. "L'uomo s'è messo al posto degli alberi e delle bestie ed ha inquinata l'aria, ha impedito il libero spazio" ("Man has taken the place of the trees and of the animals, has poisoned the air and has eliminated the open spaces," 954). At first the "ordigni," as with the animal, were extensions of man himself, necessary to his survival. Later, however, they become instruments for the dissemination of destruction and of illness.

I primi suoi ordigni parevano prolungazioni del suo braccio e non potevano essere efficaci che per la forza dello stesso, ma, oramai, l'ordigno non ha più alcuna relazione con l'arto. Ed è l'ordigno che crea la malattia con l'abbandono della legge che fu su tutta la terra creatrice.

[The earliest tools were extensions of his arm, and could not be used except by the strength of the arm. Nowadays, however, the tool bears no longer any relation to the arm. It is the tool that creates the disease by abandoning the law by which everything was created on earth. (955)]

Natural selection based on the law of the survival of the fittest, to which the animal is subject, no longer applies to man. Survival for man is in terms of the greatest number of "ordigni"—instruments of destruction—he possesses

whereby he survives by destroying others. "La legge del più forte sparì e perdemmo la selezione salutare. *Altro che psico-analisi ci vorrebbe*: sotto la legge del possessore del maggior numero di ordigni prospereranno malattie e ammalati" ("The law of the strongest disappeared, and the healthy natural selection was lost. *We need something more than psychoanalysis to help us*. Under the law of the greatest accumulation of tools, disease will prosper and the diseased will grow ever more numerous," 955, italics mine). Man's illness cannot be cured by psychoanalysis or by any other cure. The only cure, the only possible return to health, in Svevo's pessimistic and apocalyptic vision, is a world-wide catastrophe that would put an end to the human race. "Forse attraverso una catastrofe inaudita prodotta dagli ordigni ritorneremo alla salute" ("Perhaps an incredible catastrophe brought about by these tools will lead us back to health," 955). "Ci sarà un'esplosione enorme che nessuno udrà e la terra ritornata alla forma di nebulosa errerà nei cieli priva di parassiti e di malattie" ("There will be a tremendous explosion that none will hear and the earth returned to its nebulous state will wander through the sky free at last from parasites and disease," 955). Only with the destruction of the planet earth as we know it, illness will finally disappear because for Svevo that illness is man. The final explosion that will wipe man from the face of the earth is the final irony. The tool that man developed initially in order to survive, and later becomes an instrument of domination and destruction, finally turns against him and destroys him altogether. The "health" that man seeks will be achieved only with the end of man. At that moment, time too will finally come to a halt and cease to exist. In the explosive finale of the novel, Svevo's supreme, absolute irony puts an end to time and to all of man's illusions at one stroke.

Zeno's "coscienza," in Eleatic fashion, disrupts our ordinary perception of the world and reveals it in all its nakedness. Zeno, who is said to have the sickness of the word "la malattia della parola" (659), disfigures everything he says, "come aprivo la bocca svisavo cose o persone perché altrimenti mi sarebbe sembrato inutile di parlare" ("as I opened my mouth I disfigured things or people because otherwise it would have been difficult for me to speak," 659). His language is not the language of communication but of disfiguration. It reveals the "sickness" of the figure which hides the real sickness. This is not a conscious action on Zeno's part. As we have said earlier, Zeno's "coscienza" is ironic and functions despite his ordinary, commonplace mentality. "Coi miei sforzi a me toccava come a quel tiratore cui era riuscito di colpire il centro del bersaglio, però di quello posto accanto al suo" ("With my efforts I was like that marksman who always hits the target next to his," 665). This ironic knowledge is described as a knowledge without knowing: "Zeno . . . senza saperlo, sapete molte cose, mentre i miei professori sanno esattamente tutto quello che fanno" ("Zeno. . . , without knowing it you know many things while my professors know just what they know," 706). Through Zeno's ironic "coscienza" speaks a wisdom which is not his and

is not ordinary knowledge. Those who know (professors or psychoanalysts) possess only a knowledge of facts which in the last instance is useless and misleading, whereas Zeno's ironic "coscienza" is a knowledge that goes to the heart of the problem and does so by questioning and "disfiguring" examples of health. "Io sto analizzando la sua salute, ma non ci riesco perché m'accorgo che, analizzandola, la converto in malattia" ("I am analysing his health but I am not succeeding because I realize that by analysing it I convert it to illness" 727). Zeno reminds us of that philosopher who went looking for a wise man but always found that those reputed wise were more ignorant than he. Zeno is for Svevo an ironic tool, "ordigno," with which to criticize a society obsessed with health which to Svevo appeared hopelessly and incurably sick.

The reading of *La coscienza di Zeno* and the search for its meaning(s) are preoccupations rather similar to an obsession with health; the reader or the critic is not different from the analyst. As I have already indicated, in some instances the reader-critic indeed has become the analyst and has placed both Zeno and Svevo's novel on the couch. Other times the reader-critic has downplayed Svevo's pessimism by attributing it to the erratic and extremist behavior of his protagonist or simply to the shortcomings of the social class that he represents.⁹ From the account I have given of the novel it would seem instead that one of the few possible ways of reading this novel lies in adopting the definition of health that Svevo reserves for man. Just as the "coscienza" of not having been cured is the best proof of health, the best proof that one is reading this novel with a certain degree of accuracy is in the awareness that its meaning is not what one thought it to be at first but always other and different in spite of our efforts. This is a reading based *not* on the professional knowledge of what we expect or know the novel to be but on the ironic Eleatic knowledge that things are never what they seem logically to be.

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NOTES

- 1 The epigraph literally translates: "Things do not appear as well when the eyes are too wide open." All references to *La Coscienza di Zeno* will be included in the text. Extensive modifications to de Zoete's translation have been made throughout. The translation of other texts is mine.
- 2 Eduardo Saccone who proposes a psychoanalytical reading of the novel reads the phrase "Ricordo tutto, ma non intendo niente" as a division within the subject that puts into question its ability to know itself (8).
- 3 Beside Saccone's Lacanian reading we should also mention the psychoanalytical readings of Elio Gioanola and Carlo Fonda. For example, Fonda's premise and justification for his Freudian reading of Zeno and of the novel is the following, "la premessa fondamentale, l'ultima convinzione che sta alla base di tutto il nostro studio . . . è che, in questo romanzo, Svevo, ispirato indubbiamente dalla lettura di Freud, ha tentato di fare l'esperimento di vivere,

- per la durata del racconto, nella psiche malata di un isterico" ("The fundamental premise, the ultimate belief which is at the basis of all our study is that Svevo, who is without doubt inspired by a reading of Freud, has tried the experiment of living for the duration of the story in the diseased psychosis of an hysteric," 9). Fonda discounts the possibility that Svevo might be humoring the practice of psychoanalysis. "Noi riteniamo che questo esperimento lo abbia fatto seriamente e non per beffa . . ." ("We firmly believe that this experiment was made seriously and not in jest . . ." 9).
- 4 Freccero points out the similarities between Zeno Cosini and Zeno of Elea. "Svevo has called his character Zeno . . . precisely because his character is an embodiment of the spirit of the Eleatic, seeking to reconcile reality to reason" (17). Freccero understands this reference to the Greek philosopher as an attempt by the author to underscore Zeno's own personal paradox hinted at the beginning of the book. "The first chapter of Zeno's novel presents us with an old paradox in unique form: how can one reconcile the movement of life, animal health, with the transversal static cuts made by the intellect? How can one be and know that he is being? The paradox is a form of the ancient paradox of Zeno of Eleia (sic), transposed from the mysteries of space and motion to those of Augustinian duration and time" (17).
 - 5 One of the few studies solely dedicated to irony in the novel is Petersen's *Le strutture dell'ironia ne La Coscienza di Zeno di Italo Svevo*. Petersen identifies ironic themes and ironic elements in the novel but does not provide an overall reading of the novel.
 - 6 The only true analysis for Zeno, and for Svevo, is the analysis of the urine sample. "Ecco finalmente una vera analisi e non più una psico-analisi . . . Qui, invece, tutto era verità" ("Here finally was a true analysis and no longer a psycho-analysis . . . Here everything was truth" (438). Svevo/Zeno believe that psychoanalysis could be better characterized as "l'avventura psichica" ("psychic adventure" 938).
 - 7 Zeno's situation calls to mind the punishment that Sartre's characters suffer in *Huis Clos* where hell is defined as the false image others have of ourselves to which they condemn us and which we will never be able to change.
 - 8 Svevo, as is well known, became acquainted with psychoanalysis through Edward Weiss, one of the major influential psychoanalyst in Italy at the time. His enthusiasm made him even attempt a translation of Freud's *On dreams*. This interest in psychoanalytical theory, however, does not extend to the practice. Svevo was disenchanted with it when his brother-in-law Bruno, who had gone to Vienna to be analyzed by Freud, returned even more neurotic than before. For accounts in English see for instance Furbank *Italo Svevo* (especially 106–7, 177–81). Svevo's interest in "psychoanalytical" problems predates even Freud, as he says himself: "Si dice che *Senilità* e *La coscienza di Zeno* le abbia scritte sotto la sua influenza (Freud's). Per *Senilità* m'è facile di rispondere. Io pubblicai *Senilità* nel 1898 e allora Freud non esisteva o in quanto esisteva si chiamava Charlot" ("They say that *Senilità* and *La coscienza di Zeno* were written under Freud's influence. For *Senilità* the answer is easy, I published *Senilità* in 1898 and Freud did not exist then or if he did his name was Charlot"). (Camerino, 318). This quotation also implies that even more than Freud, the greatest influence on Svevo was Charlie Chaplin and his character Charlot. See Svevo's other comment quoted also by Camerino, that "Freud non può aver per la letteratura altra importanza di quella ch'ebbero a suo tempo Nietzsche o Darwin" ("Freud could not be more relevant for literature than either Nietzsche or Darwin," 319). Svevo's literary use of Freud, Nietzsche or Darwin, did not imply that he shared their philosophy. In the case of Freud and with respect to psychoanalysis's claim to cure, Svevo, as Camerino reminds us, believed that "Freud sarebbe stato buono più per i romanzieri che per gli ammalati" ("Freud would have been more useful for novelists than for the sick," 319). Svevo's similar preoccupation with the unconscious explains why, in sending a copy of *La coscienza di Zeno* to Freud, he expected to be commended by him. As Lebowitz suggests, perhaps Svevo wanted from Freud the same accolade that he had sent to Arthur Schnitzler praising him for the depth of his artistic intuitions (29–30). But just as Weiss, who at the time was a personal friend

of Freud, reneged on his promise to review *La coscienza di Zeno* because "the novel had nothing whatever to do with psychoanalysis" (Furbank, 178), so Freud, if he read the novel, not only must have felt the same but must have felt *slighted* by a novel that however full of insights into human nature also made fun of his psychoanalysis.

- 9 Debenedetti, for instance, explains the incoherence of Zeno's behaviour and his extreme manifestations of love and hatred as stemming from the author's feelings of alienation as a Jew and from his deep-seated antisemitism. "Ed ha assunto quel tono di apologia a rovescio, particolare all'antisemitismo degli ebrei, in cui l'odio e l'amore più sviscerati vanno commisti in un abbraccio mostruoso . . . Quel tono ricorda da vicino quello che riconoscevamo in Svevo, giudice e confessore del suo protagonista" ("He has taken on that apologetic tone in reverse, typical of jewish antisemitism, whereby the deepest love and hatred can be found together in a monstrous embrace . . . That tone reminds us closely of what we recognized in Svevo, judge and confessor of his protagonist," 285). Or when Zeno is seen to be emblematic of the ambiguity and impotence fo the middle classes by Lunetta.

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Una donna: Autobiography as Exemplary Text*

Since its debut in 1906, Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna* has been interpreted as a book which is simultaneously autobiography and novel, confession and paradigm, personal and universal. Starting with the earliest reviews, some critics have focused on its factual matrix and interiority, while others have highlighted its feminist message. Arturo Graf proposed that "più che di un romanzo, ha carattere di giornale intimo"¹ while, seventy-five years later, Olga Lombardi would declare that "si tratta di una lunga, appassionata confessione in cui l'autrice rifà la storia della propria vita" (737). At the same time, Graf's contemporary, Alfredo Gargiulo, understood its seminal nature, placing it "nella bibbia del femminismo, al posto della *genesì*" alongside Ibsen's plays, an opinion echoed in 1975 by Lanfranco Caretti: "è certo il primo libro femminista in Italia."² For Aleramo herself, *Una donna* was memoir, avowal, exposé, and, most profoundly, self-examination: "Ho dovuto, sempre, fare un grande sforzo per rievocare il passato che volevo, che *dovevo* narrare, e dal quale ormai ero del tutto estranea."³ In keeping with much women's writing,⁴ autobiography and novel merge creating a work which is both private and public: indeed, *Una donna* originated in a handful of diary annotations written in June 1901, a year before the neo-novelist began the composition of her first book.⁵ This "nucleo generatore" was carefully integrated into the text, emphasizing its confessional tone and sincerity. Aleramo was extremely concerned with the veracity of her fiction, as though any distortion of the facts would negate the validity of her message for, although her heroine's tale was exemplary, it was also *her* story whose telling was an act of self-revelation. In the diaries kept late in life, the writer would comment that *Una donna* was "se non proprio una menzogna, per lo meno una mutilazione della verità,"⁶ because she had not told her entire personal history, a misrepresentation remedied in *Il passaggio* (1919). The emphasis on truthfulness contained in this revisionist re-telling underlines the fusion of the real and fictional selves in Aleramo's writing:

Dissi in quel tempo che soltanto ad un interiore comando avevo ubbidito lasciando la casa dov'ero moglie e madre. Come si va ad un martirio. Ed era vero. Dissi che nessuno m'incitava all'atto terribile, e che non per amore d'un altro uomo m'esponevo così a perdere per sempre la mia creatura: anche ciò era vero.

Ma una cosa fu taciuta, allora, e più tardi nel mio libro.

Non era per amore d'un altro uomo ch'io mi liberavo: ma io amavo un altr'uomo. (*Passaggio* 27-28)

Throughout her long literary career, Sibilla would come to consistently and faithfully write herself, obliterating the demarcation between reality and imagination in a series of poetry collections, novels, and public diaries which link her production to that of other modern women "writers like Dorothy Richardson and Anaïs Nin, whose lives, journals, letters, and fiction become nearly coterminous" (Gardiner 185), to such an extent that Aleramo would come to create works like *Amo dunque sono* (1927), an autobiographical epistolary novel that reads like a diary for the beloved. Aleramo's female protagonists are projections of herself and this narcissistic identification of author and character is further heightened by the employment of a first person narration. However, the tone, style, and purpose of *Una donna* differ from the lyric and fragmentary nature of later Sibillian prose, from which this first novel was also separated by more than a decade of artistic silence.⁷

Notwithstanding its autobiographical fidelity, *Una donna* was intended as a manifesto, or a "thesis" novel, in which the obvious feminist ideology both includes and transcends the personal chronicle. In a letter dated September 17, 1904, two years prior to publication, Aleramo had already noted the paradigmatic value of her past, as well as her own detachment from it: "Io non ho messo in quelle pagine la creatura che sono oggi e che va rintracciando con umile tenacia la sua perfetta espressione: ma quella che fui: perciò esse non possono avere il valore che di un documento."⁸ Indeed, the author is writing the history of her former self, Rina Pierangeli Faccio, a name and an identity she had shed upon becoming a new woman born of the experiences recounted in the pages of her text. Like history, *Una donna* records the past. Even the confessional element is attenuated by its relegation to a former time, emotionally distancing the narrator/writer from the protagonist. While the book's first person narrative demands a participational reading reminiscent of the journals and autobiographies women often chose to compose "not only because they were more 'acceptable,' but because they often suited what was an underlying motive of women writings—the need to validate one's own experiences" (Goulianos 81), its structure is essentially realist. Critics have frequently indicated *Una donna*'s ties to the naturalist literary environment, comparing its sensitive character delineation to Bourget's penetrating psychological studies, or viewing its plot as a standard example of the "slice of life" school of documentary fiction. Rita Guerricchio has justly pointed out its similarity to the 19th century genre of the *confession rétrospective*.⁹ Like any journal, *Una donna* is a flow of memory attempting to recreate significant events and, like any diary, it is centered on the emotional states of the writer/protagonist reacting to the events described. But, because of its implied dual time frame (then and now) and the subsequent division of the "I" into narrator/witness and protagonist/actor, the book invites a binary interpretation: an understanding of the protagonist's actual story presented in the chronologically sequential plot, to be followed by an ontological re-evaluation in light of the changes undergone by the narrator.

The heroine's experiences offer a maturation process in progress whereas the narrating "I" attests to the achievement of the desired maturity and self-affirmation. In feminist terms, the witness has achieved the psychological liberation for which the protagonist is striving. In many ways, *Una donna* is a "libro della mia memoria" which, like the Dantesque prototype, declares *incipit vita nova*, a new life whose meaning is understood in both personal and universal terms after the narrator has reappraised the past.

In recreating the significant moments in her own life, Aleramo seeks to associate a woman with Everywoman; the autobiographical tale becomes the story of woman-kind. In doing so, the author explores a variety of standard female literary motifs, which have been identified and described in recent scholarship on women writers,¹⁰ and utilizes several significant archetypal patterns, which will be detailed in the course of this analysis. Among the recurrent themes, common to women's fiction, we find: the focus on family life, including the issues of bonding with the parents, particularly the mother; the portrayal of adolescence as an androgynous period in which the growing girl falls prey to romantic illusions fostered by fanciful readings or social indoctrination; male seduction leading to the eventual betrayal of the young women's dreams and fantasies; the presentation of marriage as the imprisonment of the individual, who seeks escape through either sublimation (in maternity or art), madness, or death. In addition, many of Aleramo's structural and stylistic choices serve to depersonalize and, thereby, universalize, her narration. The division of the text and its ordering indicate Sibilla's adherence to a somewhat traditional format. The story line is presented sequentially from earliest childhood memories to the narrating present with no use of flashbacks and a relatively consistent use of the past tenses.¹¹ Because *Una donna* is meant to represent the opportunities for growth and transformation even in the midst of oppression, the adoption of the *passato remoto* and the *imperfetto* also signifies the narrator's break with the past. The heroine has gone beyond the reality described and survived; the past is now memory, albeit painful. By implication, other women in similar circumstances can do the same. It is important to note that Aleramo's first draft was written in the present tense,¹² which naturally intensified the emotional level and the immediacy of communication, making the book more diaristic, but this verbal choice narrowed the focus on change and rebirth. By opting for the finality of the past tenses rather than the ongoing quality of the present, the author requires her public to assume the perspective of the narrating "I."

The framework of *Una donna* is composed of three interrelated sections, each with a clear thematic core. In turn, the internal structures of each part are complementary, although they do not correspond in chronological time. Parti Prima and Seconda are of similar length (nine and ten chapters, respectively) but of unequal duration: the first follows the heroine from childhood to a suicide attempt through a series of obligatory female rites of passage including puberty, marriage, and motherhood; the second section

stresses inner growth and its time is psychologically defined; the chapters indicate interior change rather than the passage of years and the protagonist's education is predominantly spiritual. Not incidentally, the nine chapters of *Parte Prima* contrast thematically with the ten of *Seconda*: the former document the heroine's integration into the roles society creates for her and their destructive aftermath whereas the latter stress personal, rather than social, development. *Parte Terza* covers a short temporal span and a mere three chapters in narrative space; its truncated length is a sign of its content, for the protagonist opts for authenticity and abandons her family and, by doing so, the past. This focus on growth and process leading to closure suggest an inherent affinity between the design of *Una donna* and the patterns of the *Bildungsroman*.

Generically, a *Bildung* story details the psychological development of the main character; as it is traditionally defined, such a novel is an optimistic rendering of male development and integration into the social fabric. The genre's acknowledged prototype, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1796), follows the adventures and misadventures of the protagonist, a merchant's son, as he sets forth to learn about life and decipher its meaning in a series of sexual encounters, work experiences, reversals, and achievements. The sequel, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre, oder die Entsagenden* (1821–1829), depicts the mature Meister relating to his society as a contributing member. Briefly put, the classic German *Bildungsroman* and its imitators are about leaving childhood, exploring the world, and learning lessons with the specific intent of creating rational, responsible paradigms of human behavior; the hero gradually matures by leaving the security of family and home and venturing into the unknown and often hostile world. In the end, the *Bildung* hero has achieved a private identity which allows him to integrate into a social group (generally, the bourgeoisie) by adopting its values. Clearly, many of the *topoi* utilized in a male *Bildung* process cannot apply to female protagonists because of the diverse natures of their socio-sexual development. Recent studies on novels of female maturation, notably Annis Pratt's *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* and the anthological *The Voyage in Fictions of Female Development*, have dealt with variations on the *Bildungsroman* as it is adjusted to portray women's reality. The nineteenth century proposed two models of female development novels. Early, socially conservative stories written for young girls emphasized patriarchal values to their readers, such as chastity, domesticity, submissiveness, and altruism. Texts like Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868) or Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and their Italian counterparts, for example Neera's and Marchesa Colombi's numerous novels, taught girls the need to subordinate their individuality and will to others in order to become good wives and mothers through acquiescence, chastity, and self-sacrifice. These novels offered models for "growing down" rather than "growing up,"¹³ to distinguish the different existential sphere inhabited by women. Since the traditional woman's domain is private rather than pub-

lic, her life-style is defined by confinement and passivity offering no valid openings to the outside world in which the male conducts his quest for identity, autonomy, and position. Female life is directed to closure not adventure, obeisance not action, chastity not sexuality. Therefore, while the female novels of development follow the linear pattern of the male *Bildungsroman* in tracing their heroines from childhood into adulthood, the maturation process is necessarily spiritual, since girls are not afforded mobility, and their human encounters and work experiences are purely domestic. Lacking freedom and unable to leave the home, such a heroine grows through her relationships with a limited, familiar number of individuals and through her own inwardness. Her apprenticeship is pre-ordained. A sub-genre of this conventional and conservative female *Bildung* novel traces the spiritual nature of the heroine's quest beyond its seemingly inevitable conclusion in marriage and maternity. Often called the "novel of awaking," this version deals with "the struggle—and, all too often, failure—of women to achieve ethical autonomy"¹⁴ within traditional society. In this variation on the novel of development, the protagonist comes to understand the disparity between social expectations and personal aspirations; because of a fundamental discontent with her lot and through personal meditation, the "awakened" heroine strives for self-fulfillment and authenticity only to be blocked by the obstacles created by the patriarchal order. "The protagonist's growth results typically not with 'an art of living,' as for her male counterpart, but instead with a realization that for a woman such an art of living is difficult or impossible: it is an awakening to limitations."¹⁵ In keeping with this negative epiphany, many late nineteenth and early twentieth century novels of awakening end tragically with adultery, loss, madness, and even death due to the impossibility of integrating individual needs and the demands of social conformity. Seeking real growth, the heroine meets with rejection and dead-ends forcing her to retreat, abdicate, or choose non-conformity and exile.

Una donna's narrative patterns borrow from both the classic female novel of development and its evolutionary offspring, the novel of awakening. The initial pattern described in the book's first chapters appears to herald a standard male *Bildungsroman*, for the protagonist as child rejects passivity and domesticity in favor of action and energy. She reads voraciously, possesses a questioning mind, finds pleasure in her athletic prowess, emulates her father's work ethic, refuses feminine tasks, and rejects the home in favor of office work at the factory. Drawn to power, independence, authority, intellect, and an undefined sensuality, the girl favors the assertive world and personality of her father while denying the value of her mother's femininity. It is only with advancing puberty and the forced recognition of her sexual identification that the protagonist conforms to standard behavioral norms applied to women and, even then, only after having been manipulated, spiritually seduced, and physically violated by an attractive and inferior co-worker. At this point, the text implies that cross-sexual attitudes call for the downfall of the "mas-

culine" heroine as a negative model which is to be avoided: "for women, identification with the father can only interfere with development. Women who rebel against the female role are perceived as unnatural and pay the price of unhappiness, if not madness or death."¹⁶ The rape of her innocence is the end of the protagonist's spiritual virginity and spatial freedom. It is also the introduction of a more conventional female development pattern directed at producing good mothers and wives rather than rebellious androgyne. As often occurs in early female *Bildungsromane*, the non-conformist girl must be made to comply through suffering and punishment. Because of her violent sexual initiation, the heroine's biology has become her destiny and she must follow society's fixed gender roles. Having lost ownership of her body according to established morality, this child-woman of fifteen abdicates her personhood as well and becomes the property of her rapist:

Appartenevo ad un uomo, dunque? Lo credetti dopo non so quanti giorni d'uno smarrimento senza nome.

.....

Avevo cominciato a pensare che forse amavo il giovane da tanti mesi senza saperlo. . . . Poi avevo soggiunto che forse, in quell'avvenire di amore e di dedizione non mai prima intraveduto, era la salvezza, era la pace, era la gioia. Sua moglie . . . Non l'ero di già? Egli m'aveva voluta, egli m'era destinato, tutto s'era disposto mentre io credevo seguire una ben diversa via . . . Quello sposo delle leggende, che m'era sempre parso un pucile personaggio, esisteva, era lui! (*Una donna* 48-49)

Her acceptance of his will equals the endorsement of sexual pre-determination according to the values of passivity, vigilance, and subordination required of a woman because of the very nature of her female-ness and fostered—consciously and unconsciously—in gender-directed cultural messages. The metamorphosis from ravager into prince, violence into love, and independent human being into possession re-establishes the traditional prototype of the female *Bildungsroman*: her role is that of the fairy-tale heroine. Like Snow White or Sleeping Beauty, she prepares for a life similar to those fictions which "portrayed acquiescent females who cultivated domestic virtues in dreamy anticipation of a prince's rescue by which the heroine might enter magically into marriage—her highest calling."¹⁷ Having entered the female sphere, the heroine is quite literally domesticated, abandoning the outer world for the interior spaces reserved her sex. It is her first taste of closure, as she is confined to her father's house, awaiting marriage:

V'era stato davvero un tempo in cui io potevo recarmi alla spiaggia a mio piacere, a tuffarmi per ore nell'acqua, e vagar nella campagna, e abbandonarmi a sogni di lavoro e di bellezza senza fine?

Adesso le giornate scorrevano quasi per intero nel silenzio della mia stanzetta. (53)

With marriage, not only physical surroundings, but the entire future is limited: "io ero proprio una *donna maritata*, un personaggio serio, cui l'esistenza era

definitivamente fissata" (55). With the achievement of the married state, *Una donna*'s heroine has completed the voyage of discovery charted for women, crowned with the joy of motherhood. Yet, just as marriage is a closure to the dreams, hopes, aspirations and freedom of adolescence, other such terminations and impediments appear as the novel progresses, continuing the protagonist's maturation process. Attempting to be the perfect wife, the heroine becomes a perfectly unhappy one, reacting with inertia and frigidity to her new husband. Her legendary prince has not rescued her but metamorphosed, instead, into a tyrannical, sexually demanding toad. Maternity augurs a new fulfillment and an escape from personal unhappiness which is socially acceptable but it does not complete her. As she attempts to regain a measure of meaningfulness and power over the environment through her child, he becomes her stand-in as she sets out to mold him, making the boy the image of her perfect self, an impossible task. The more she gives her son, the less the heroine has left for herself:

In verità, al di fuori della somma di energie ch'io spendevo attorno al bambino, era in me un'incapacità sempre maggiore di vedere, di volere, di vivere: come una stanchezza morale si sovrapponeva a quella fisica, lo scontento di me stessa, il rimprovero della parte migliore di me che avevo trascurata, di quel mio io profondo e sincero, così a lungo represso, mascherato. Non era un'infermità, era la deficienza fondamentale della mia vita che si faceva sentire. In me la madre non s'integrava nella donna. (74-75)

At this juncture in the text, a conservative *Bildungsroman* would create a crisis situation, the death or grave illness of the child perhaps, and bring the protagonist back to her senses and her appropriate place as a faithful wife and devoted mother. Instead, Aleramo shifts the action so that the book clearly presents itself as a novel of awakening rather than a classic novel of female development whose intended goal is the exaltation of passive womanly virtues and the praise of married life. Now conscious of her inner needs and existential angst, the heroine seeks for wholeness; another opening to personal satisfaction materializes in the person of a "forestiero," an outsider come to invade her limited physical and psychological spaces. She idealizes her platonic lover and romanticizes the beauty of their adulterous attachment, only to reject him too when he proves as animalistic and egotistical as her rapist husband. By the conclusion of the first section of *Una donna*, the heroine has attempted all avenues of self-realization open to women in a traditional society: marriage, motherhood, and romantic love. All have failed her and the consequences of having violated her vows (albeit only in thought) and having stained her husband's name (her own being valueless) are abuse, public dishonor, and further confinement into the unreachable recesses of her house turned prison. Beaten and unheeded, "come un oggetto immondo" (90), the bruised woman chooses the negative self-affirmation of suicide only to be forced back to life.

Seen as an independent whole, *Una donna*'s Parte Prima operates as a prototype of the novel of awakening, very like Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, books to which it is often compared. Like Emma Bovary and Edna Pontellier, Sibilla's protagonist is the victim of an inherent duality. Caught between society's dictums and her private self, she turns to adulterous love, despair, and death. All three characters seek resolutions to their emptiness first in marriage, then through their children, and finally in an alternative passion, only to find that all are wanting; thus, suicide becomes the last possibility for women suffocating in their optionless lives. The awareness of social constraints, the subordination to a spouse's whims and demands in keeping with the Pauline injunction that wives submit to their husbands, motherly affection, and the abdication to male supremacy are all signs of a cyclical fate which is passed from mother to daughter through the generations, offering only resignation, madness, or death as female openings: "Amare e sacrificarsi e soccombere! Questo il destino [di mia madre] e forse di tutte le donne?" (64). The opening and closing sentences of this section of Aleramo's novel point to the negative knowledge achieved by the protagonist. Going from an attitude of vital autonomy—"La mia fanciullezza fu libera e gagliarda" (19)—to one of lifeless abandon to the power of the other, the male—"Ma la mano ferma ed inflessibile mi resse il capo, mi costrinse" (93)—the heroine has awakened to the reality of her woman's identity in a patriarchal universe. In her depiction of this female *iter* which closely parallels her own experiences, Sibilla Aleramo manages to integrate a number of recognizable archetypal images that mirror the universal female condition and emphasize the paradigmatic nature of her *Bildung* narrative.

Since archetypes are woven into the fabric of the collective unconscious, these categories are not necessarily calculated by the artist but flow naturally into a work, being common, if variable, images, narrative patterns, and types. A number of recurrent archetypal patterns found in literature by women, as identified by Annis Pratt, emerge from *Una donna*.¹⁸ These include patterns the critic terms green world, rape trauma, growing-up-grotesque, marriage as enclosure, insanity, and punishment for transgression. As employed by Aleramo, these archetypes are not mutually exclusive but blend harmoniously in the structure of her plot and the characterization of her protagonists. In her adolescent, pre-sexual development, Sibilla's heroine displays a predilection for physical sovereignty and a one-ness with the infinite natural world (the green world archetype) that sets her apart from the invasive and threatening social order and offers her a place for authenticity. At the same time, she finds herself innately unsuited because of her intellect, aspirations, and self-determination to the community she rejects but is destined to enter (the growing-up-grotesque archetype).

The vitality and hopefulness characterizing the adolescent hero's attitude toward her future here meet and conflict with the expectations and dictates of the surrounding society. Every element of her desired world—freedom to come and go, alle-

giance to nature, meaningful work, exercise of the intellect, and use of her own erotic capabilities – inevitably clashes with patriarchal norms. (Pratt 29)

The adolescent's ingress into male-dominated society is often forced and involves the loss of autonomy and self-hood (the rape trauma), contrasting the freedom of the green world with the enclosure of marriage. Part of the Sibillian protagonist's grotesqueness is based on her personal identification with masculine rather than feminine qualities. Aleramo clearly divides the two spheres through the representation of the parental figures. The Father and Mother are both individuals and stereotypes, embodying, respectively, reason and emotion. He is a scientist, risk-taker, manager, leader, freethinker, and atheist: the symbol of authority and action. By comparison, she is a shadow figure whose traits include submissiveness, fragility, resignation, sentimentality, and anxiety.¹⁹ The dynamic Father overpowers the passive Mother, controls her, and eventually breaks her will. The daughter's affinities, before marriage, are totally paternal as she is drawn to him in a complex, exclusive, and exclusionary bond:

Era lui il luminoso esemplare per la mia piccola individualità, lui che mi rappresentava la bellezza della vita: un istinto mi faceva ritenere provvidenziale il suo fascino. Nessuno gli somigliava: egli sapeva tutto e aveva sempre ragione. (19)

Even into pubescence, the protagonist continues to cater to her paternal demigod, more son than daughter. She emulates his work ethic and beliefs, keeps her hair short, runs, swims, works at the factory, and rejects the passive life of her mother. Drawn to male power, she is androgynous and abhors her blossoming womanhood, outrightly rejecting marriage as her destiny. It is the Mother she is repudiating and the traditional female role. Whereas father and daughter are ostracized and excluded by the community, a small provincial Southern town, the mother is honored as the ideal: "Trovavano alla mamma un viso da madonna, e voci femminili le mormoravan dietro benedizioni per i suoi bambini" (30). The Marian model is a perfect patriarchal projection of suitable womanliness in its devotion, piety, humility, chastity, and obedience to male authority. Such virtues are shunned in men, however, "and the type of virtues decreed feminine degenerate easily: obedience becomes docility; gentleness, irresolution; humility, cringing; forbearance, long suffering" (Warner 190). Trapped in her virtues and rendered powerless, the Mother gains public commendation but loses herself. The frail woman, unloved and unnecessary, impulsively attempts suicide, survives, and slowly declines into childishness and then, insanity. The melancholia, hysteria, and masochism of the Mother are brought about by her enclosure in the spaces and limitations of marriage, which afford her no room of her own in which to define herself. Having lost her husband's love, fidelity, and erotic interest, she develops into the mad wife so common in literature by women: insanity is the consummation of the bounded female condition. Aleramo's Mother is confined from

the beginning to the end of the novel. She inhabits her house, the only universe she knows. Even her joyful memories are contained in four domestic walls: "La mamma si illuminava nel volto bianco e puro le rarissime volte che accennava alle due stanzine coi mobili a nolo dei primi mesi di vita coniugale" (22). Significantly, the Father introduces his daughter to working spaces and nature whereas the Mother instructs her in prayer in the limits of her childhood room. While the Father's spaces enlarge, the Mother's narrow. She can only escape by fleeing the house, flinging herself from a window during her suicide attempt. In the end, she is truly "confined" to the cell of an asylum where she disintegrates slowly until she disappears altogether in death. The Mother's final space, a legacy to her daughter, is a box which contains forgotten letters, words from a past which is being relived in the daughter's present.

After her rape and subsequent engagement, *Una donna's* heroine finds herself excluded from male space and confined to domestic areas. Exiled from the factory and work, she sees her boundaries progressively narrowing. The parental house is left for a small apartment from which she can gaze upon the area of her lost freedom through glass openings:

Le finestre della saletta da pranzo del nostro appartamento davano su uno stradone, di là dal quale si stendevano alcuni orti, al fondo si scorgeva un profilo di colline e una striscia di mare. (55)

After the discovery of her supposed adultery, the *marito-padrone* limits her access to the public rooms to the morning hours, then "per tema ch'io ricevessi qualcuno, venivo chiusa a chiave fino al suo ritorno . . . sola col piccino nell'ambiente caldo e ingombro della camera da letto prospiciente sul giardino abbandonato" (98). It is symbolic that the heroine's prince of love become her jailer in marriage, locking his two properties in the room which most defines the wife's sexual submission and social role. It is also the room of her supposed adultery, for which she is expected to pay with her life according to a violent code of honor (the punishment for transgression archetype):

. . . dopo una notte inenarrabile in cui il mio viso ricevette a volta a volta sputi e baci, e il mio corpo divenne null'altro che un povero involucro inanimato, mi sentii proporre una simulazione di suicidio . . . "Bisogna che io ti faccia morire di mia mano; ma non voglio andar in galera: devo far credere che ti sei data la morte da te stessa . . ." (90)

The decision to commit suicide by poison, with its obvious literary echoes, becomes the protagonist's chosen path to deliverance, preferable to the route of insanity taken by her mother. It is a standard escape from the patriarchy chosen by women from Emma Bovary to Sylvia Plath, but, it does not conclude Sibilla Aleramo's book.

Una donna's Parte Seconda offers an alternative *Bildung* pattern which structurally mirrors the movement in the novel's first section, but offers another mode of development unrelated to traditional female roles and, thus,

fundamentally non-sexual. The protagonist defines her attempted suicide as a means of cancelling out the past and beginning anew: "La mia esistenza doveva finire in quel punto: la donna ch'io ero stata fino a quella notte doveva morire" (95). The voyage into the realm of the dead becomes the instrument of rebirth: "Da un'altra sponda . . . Come nel punto di darmi la morte, io considerai il mondo e me stessa con occhi affatto nuovi, rinascendo" (95). The period of recovery is a gradual exorcism, a necessary confrontation with the past and a tentative search for regeneration. Enclosed in her domestic prison, the protagonist explores the only space open to her: the mind. Docile, conscious of her impotence in the social sphere, "condannata a camminare curva" (101), she transforms her jail into a cloister devoted to spiritual growth. The signs for this change are books, particularly one which offers her "una causa di salvezza" (102). Like Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, she too finds books a means to growth. Meaningfully, the readings that influence the protagonist of Parte Prima are romances, love stories, fairy tales: "Io leggevo nei libri vicende d'amore e d'odio" (33). The redemptive book of her new spiritual life is a sociological tract, an intellectual reflection on the human condition, in which she could participate "all'ideale costruzione d'un mondo" (103). From her diaries and later writings, it is possible to catalogue Aleramo's known readings,²⁰ which correspond to the life experiences portrayed in the first and second parts of *Una donna*. In childhood and youth these included the major Romantics: Dumas, Hugo, Manzoni, Aleardi, and De Amicis. The texts of her intellectual growth counted Whitman, Emerson, Nietzsche, Amiel, Ibsen, and the first, generative volume — Guglielmo Ferrero's *L'Europa giovane* (1897), whose fervent humanitarian and socialist tone appealed to the budding intellectual's need for a mission in life to replace the insufficiency of her wifely state. First by serious reading, then through writing, the heroine discovers an opening to the vast community beyond her provincial town and repressive family. Words become the means of consolation and communication, the negation of her isolation, and an affirmation of her spiritual freedom. Through the act of writing, Aleramo's protagonist conclusively rejects solipsism in favor of human association, even within the limits of her marital boundaries. Still confined to her rooms, she can elude inertia through the activity of her mind and enter the outside world by sending forth her words. It is at this point in the narrative that the heroine discovers her similarity to other women; her fate corresponds to that of innumerable generations of wives and mothers. Joining the struggle for change and emancipation, the heroine finds a measure of self-worth in her intellectual contributions which recalls the sense of self-hood and hopeful achievement experienced in early adolescence before she became defined by her female-ness. Within the text's imagery, this spiritual opening is followed by spatial expansion, as the action moves from the provincial town of Parte Prima to the urban perimeters of Rome.

Having been "allowed" to work for a woman's magazine under her hus-

band's vigilant and resentful gaze, Aleramo's woman discovers the existence of welcome enclosures, such as the work place, studios, salons, and theaters, which are growth-producing and non-confining. This expansion of her universe from the private to the public, as she moves from the oppressive town to the metropolis, is only one aspect of the specularity linking the first and second parts of *Una donna*. Just as the protagonist redefines the physical boundaries of the woman's sphere, so too she reinterprets her former perceptions of marriage, family, and love. Whereas in Parte Prima, the characters are denoted by their functions in relationship to the heroine as a member of the patriarchy—mother, father, in-laws, husband, son, doctor, stranger, and so forth—in the Seconda the women in particular are defined by their public capacities outside of their traditional roles: editor, writer, actress, artist. The heroine quickly adopts a new role model, a “buona mamma mia” of the spirit rather than of blood, who offers “un tacito convegno . . . alla mia anima” (130) and inspires by her altruism, social activism, integrity, and steadfastness: “era bene l'immagine del genio femminile manifestatosi attraverso i secoli in qualche rara individualità più forte d'ogni costrizione di legge o di costume” (136). Drawn to unconventional, dedicated, independent individualists, Sibilla's woman reassesses her beliefs, discovers the existence of love based on shared values and freely given, and becomes infatuated with the mysterious “profeta,” an ascetic metaphysician who is the antithesis of her brutal domineering mate. These elective affinities, the stimulation of her mind, her personal achievements and professional accomplishments enlarge her horizons but do not lead to freedom. Even at work, she is controlled and subject to her husband's desires, his insurance policy being their son. Given the option of a legal separation but the loss of her son, the woman returns with her husband to their provincial home, remaining in the emotional desert of her marriage, held there by convention, law, and proprietary instinct. Denied the life and liberty desired, she relinquishes her better self and returns to bondage. The movement from affirmation to defeat underlying the structure of *Una donna*'s Parte Prima is reiterated as the protagonist repeats her suicide attempt, killing not the body but the soul. While packing, she realizes that her boxes are “tante bare nelle quali seppellivo, cogli oggetti e coi libri, i miei sogni e i miei palpiti” (173). It is one of a series of metaphors depicting the ineluctability and proximity of death which close Parte Seconda, ranging from the vision of her dying friend who is weakened and consumed by disease, the “cara dormiente” carried away on “il carro carico di fiori,” to the tomb-like decay of the prophet's dwelling which she enters through “l'oscura scala della vecchia umida casa,” and concluding with the heaviness of the final image: “avevo . . . ribadito la catena” (171–173).

The second section of *Una donna* is a modification of the novel of awakening in which the protagonist realizes the paradigmatic qualities of her individual experience and interprets herself as an example of the general female condition. Logically, having undergone such “consciousness-raising,” the

narrator adds a tone of "analisi-accusa"²¹ to the linear telling of her story which invites the reader to make further comparisons between *this* woman and other women. Such a comparison is being undertaken within the text by the heroine herself as part of her existential reassessment. Whereas the first part of the novel was dominated by the description of characters and events, the second augments the importance of meditation, in keeping with the protagonist's new life of spiritual awareness. The entire patriarchal order is under scrutiny and found wanting; Aleramo attacks class divisions, the subservience of women, the structure of the family, sexual education, social hypocrisy, the legal system, standardized gender roles, superstition, religious bigotry, and much more. The assault is sufficiently pervasive to lead feminist critic Maria Antonietta Macciocchi to muse on *Una donna*'s substantial political momentousness for the present:

Così il libro dell'Aleramo, proprio nel più rigoroso contesto ideologico marxista, mi pare costituisca oggi una potente arma di lotta nel campo delle idee perché, malgrado la sua "ingenuità" esteriore, esso è costruito come battaglia a morte dentro e contro il centro della sovrastruttura morale egemone della borghesia, che, come detto, è malauguratamente quella di quasi tutta la "società civile." (6)

Although not a Marxist until late in her long life, Sibilla Aleramo was well aware of the subversive nature of her book. But before she could enunciate a mature revolutionary message, she had to confront the core of her social and biological being—motherhood—within her life and, later, text.

In *Una donna*, it is through sexual initiation, marriage, and, most profoundly, maternity, that the woman first identifies herself as female, shifting her allegiance and empathy from Father to Mother. It is a move the heroine initially rejects, for "often there is a conflict between a 'personal identification' with the admirable aspects of the mother and a rejection of 'positional identification' with the mother as victim" (Gardiner 186). Actually, the protagonist is repudiating her mother's self-sacrificing masochism which has become synonymous with the older woman's self-destruction: "Dinanzi a quella miseria umana che mi ricercava nel mezzo della notte, ebbi una rivolta selvaggia di tutto l'essere . . ." (62). Yet, upon becoming a mother herself, the daughter reverts to a similar pattern of self-sacrifice, experiencing the joys of an indissoluble union with another being who totally loves and accepts her. The heroine initially agrees with the premise that maternity is gratification. Finding that thesis wanting, she remains unable to resolve the dichotomy between motherly selflessness and individual self-realization until the final section of the novel.

Having already determined the separation between personhood and motherhood in Parte Prima during her abortive search for romantic love, the protagonist determines the importance of personhood *for* motherhood during her long meditations in the book's central section: "Ma la buona madre non deve essere, come la mia, una semplice creatura di sacrificio: deve essere

una donna, una persona umana" (114–115). To become that complete person, within the circumstances created by the social order, requires total severance, an action she is unwilling to take because of her maternal attachment. Like its predecessors, the *Parte Terza* begins on a note of affirmation:

Per la prima volta sentivo intera la mia indipendenza morale, mentre a Roma avevo sempre conservato, in fondo, qualche scrupolo nell'affermarmi libera, sciolta d'ogni obbligo verso colui al quale la legge mi legava. (175)

The return to the abhorred town proves so compressing to the protagonist that she is destined to implode into madness or explode into rebellion, finding herself enclosed in her mad mother's house and detested husband's family, unless she acts upon her recognition of moral autonomy. Concluding that "*la rassegnazione non è una virtù*" (172) but the abdication of the self, the woman realizes that the love of her son costs his mother's humiliation and denial, which proves too great a sacrifice for both. The heroine acknowledges that mothering is actually selfishness rather than selflessness for the traditional matriarch demands fulfillment from her offspring since she cannot achieve it in her own life. The author reaches the nucleus of the patriarchal attitude towards women—the biological destiny of permanent and altruistic bonding to their children—and calls it a lie:

Perché nella maternità adoriamo il sacrificio? Donde è scesa a noi questa inumana idea dell'immolazione materna? Di madre in figlia, da secoli, si tramanda il servaggio. È una mostruosa catena. Tutte abbiamo, a un certo punto della vita, la coscienza di quel che fece pel nostro bene chi ci generò; e con la coscienza il rimorso di non aver compensato adeguatamente l'olocausto della persona diletta. Allora riversiamo sui nostri figli quanto non demmo alle madri, rinnegando noi stesse e offrendo un nuovo esempio di mortificazione, di annientamento. (182)

The protagonist does not negate her maternal feelings but, rather than remain in an unhappy and destructive family out of a sense of guilt and duty, fostering the continuation of the female cycle of subordination and depersonalization, she opts for authenticity and loss. Rejecting her role, "*in certo modo legittimando una ignobile schiavitù, santificando una mostruosa menzogna*" by continuing to wear "*la maschera di moglie soddisfatta*" (189), the woman escapes in order to be true to herself and survive. To do so, she must give up her child, thus proposing another ancient archetype found in the myths of the mother goddesses who, like Isis, must sacrifice their sons to renew themselves.²² While ending on a note of closure—the end of a marriage, a social condition, a lifestyle, a role—the concluding section of *Una donna* subverts the reader's expectations. Its closure is not a suicide by a personal rebirth: the heroine willingly and knowingly leaves her former self behind to become her authentic "*I*," the voice of the narrator. Her act is assertive, not passive. Boarding a train in the darkness of night, she emerges to a new day in a new space which is difficult but open to her: "*. . . mi avviai triste ma*

ferma, tra il fumo e la folla, fuor della stazione, m'inoltrai, misera e sperduta, nelle strade rumorose ove il sole sgombrava la nebbia" (199). Desolate over the loss of her child, but "in pace con me stessa" (202), Sibilla Aleramo's prototypical woman completes her voyage from the enclosed spaces of her traditional past to the open possibilities of an uncertain future, having completed the journey from pre-determination to self-determination in a metaphor of death leading to life and darkness unto dawn.

Compared to the structure of the first and second sections of *Una donna*, Parte Terza is visibly truncated, a mere three chapters covering about one chronological year. Within the thematics of the book, such a reduction signifies open-endedness and promise: the narrator-witness speaking from the "now" about "then" offers an option to all who make the same journey of discovery. It is not coincidental that the final pages of Aleramo's text present a semantic switch from the Past to the Present and Future tenses proposing hope in place of despair, choice rather than destiny. Within the *Bildungsroman* tradition, Sibilla Aleramo is returning to the model of the male novel of development, but at mid-point, just as the hero is about to venture into the outside world, after having received his early formal education, as yet uncertain as to what awaits him. Having exited from the private world reserved to women in the patriarchy, Aleramo's narrator and protagonist merge, a character in flux, narrating the past to make it intelligible but also to terminate it. Having experienced her own epiphany, Sibilla offers her life as an exemplar for others. Her autobiography is joined to history: "integrazione di personalità diventa per l'Aleramo anche integrazione della propria situazione con la situazione femminile storica" (in Federezoni 55). Rebelling against polarized gender roles, internalized prejudices, sexual predestination, and enclosure, the author depicts her own awakening as the voyage of Everywoman, thereby creating one of the earliest examples of female rebirth fiction and fulfilling the dream of her protagonist-persona. Within the *Bildungsroman* tradition, she is returning, in essence, to the model of the male novel of development, cruelly truncated in the first chapters of Parte Prima by biological predetermination: this return is at mid-point, just as the *Bildung* hero is about to venture into the outside world, as yet uncertain as to what awaits. The distinctions between male and female are erased offering the beginning, if not the whole, of a genderless novel of development. For her part, Sibilla Aleramo had produced "un libro, il libro . . . un libro d'amore e di dolore . . . che mostrasse al mondo intero l'anima femminile moderna." *Una donna* is her "capolavoro equivalente ad una vita" (122).

NOTES

- * This article, originally accepted for *Quaderni d'italianistica*, appeared erroneously in the volume *Donna: Women in Italian Culture*. Ed. A. Testaferri. Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1989 (University of Toronto Italian Studies 7). We reprint it here, with some minor changes and adjournments by the author.
- 1 In Graf. The critical tendency to interpret Aleramo as a confessional writer is constant and fostered by the writer's autobiographical declarations. In his analysis of the novel, Ugo Ojetti suggested it was an "esempio vivo e franco d'una nuova morale che proclama il proprio diritto alla libertà e all'intelligenza attiva." Ojetti's view is echoed in a recent article by Lea Melandri: "La professione insistente di 'sincerità' confonde: Sibilla è così determinata nel voler essere 'sincera,' semplicemente perché si sente nel 'vero' e nel 'giusto,' può essere con tanta innocenza *spudorata* rispetto alla legge morale e alla tradizione, solo perché ha trovata 'pace interiore' in un'altra 'legge' e un altro 'ordine.'" (14).
 - 2 Caretti 170. Aleramo's first novel was immediately embraced by the proponents of the Questione femminile as a significant contribution to literature about woman's role in society. Not all reviewers were defendants of the novel, however. Virginia Olper Monis was one of many to criticize the sacrifice of the protagonist's son to her individuality, concluding "perciò non è possibile porlo ad esempio delle donne pensanti." For discussions of *Una donna*'s importance for feminist discourse see Caesar, Cecchi, Nozzoli, and Pezzini's "L'autobiografismo e il femminismo" in Federezoni, Pezzini, Pozzato. Offering multiple critical methodologies, Contorbia, Melandri, and Morino's *Sibilla Aleramo. Coscienza e scrittura* is an anthology of short essays dealing with the writer's life, works, diaries, and literary connections. It also contains an extensive bibliography. Viano looks at Aleramo's "spazio otobiografico." More specifically literary treatments are found in Guerichio, Miceli Jeffries, and Jewell. Pickering-lazzi discusses the theme of motherhood in *Una donna*.
 - 3 In Aleramo *La donna e il Femminismo* 171. The quotation is a diary entry from the *Taccuini*, dated "estate 1903"
 - 4 The autobiographical nature of women's writing is a characteristic and well-studied phenomenon. An interesting investigation into the ways in which women novelists create self-expression is conducted by Spacks in *The Female Imagination*. More recent excursions into the "theory and practice of autobiography" by women are proposed in books edited by the Personal Narratives Group and Stanton.
 - 5 During her long life, Aleramo always kept diaries and regularly affirmed the ties between her existential experiences and her writing. The confessional nature of *Una donna* is reinforced in the final chapter of the book, in which the author declares the work to be a journal for her lost son. The actual diary annotations which inspired *Una donna*, known as the "nucleo generatore," are found in Aleramo's *La donna e il Femminismo*. The best source for biographical information on the writer, based extensively on her works and primary sources, is Conti and Morino's *Sibilla Aleramo e il suo tempo*. The editors of this volume integrate considerable material from Aleramo's fiction and non-fictional writings in their re-creation of her life and time, allowing the writer to speak for herself.
 - 6 *Amore insolito* 335. Aleramo writes that it was at the suggestion of Giovanni Cena, then her lover, that she excluded the story of her affair with poet Guglielmo Felice Damiani from the plot of *Una donna*. Cena believed that the inclusion of an adulterous love would trivialize the impact of the novel and deflect interest from the potent feminist statement desired. Aleramo would later attribute this advice to Cena's bruised male ego rather than to his literary acumen.
 - 7 Aleramo began work on *Una donna* in 1902; it was published in 1906 by STEN after having received several rejections. Her next novel appeared in 1919. In the dozen or so years between works, Aleramo was involved in social work alongside her lover Cena. At first she worked in a clinic for the poor sponsored by the Unione Femminile; later, she dedicated herself to the creation of schools for migrant workers in the Agro Romano. Her social involvements included gathering earthquake relief for Sicily in 1908 and aid to

- prostitutes. The separation from Cena initiated a long period of temporary liaisons — well into her middle-age — with several notable and younger figures of the Italian cultural scene, including Vincenzo Cardarelli, Dino Campana, Giovanni Papini, Umberto Boccioni, and Salvatore Quasimodo. She was considered a sexual superwoman of sorts and a proponent of free love. Notwithstanding a nomadic existence, Aleramo continued to produce poetry, novels, plays, and non-fiction until her death in 1960. Her attachment to social causes became foremost in her later years, when she joined the Communist Party and became its active spokesperson.
- 8 Part of a letter to Angelo Conti, quoted in Guerricchio 81.
 - 9 Guerricchio 81. Lombardi declares that Aleramo is “legata a un clima e a una stagione naturalistica di cui elabora liberamente i moduli con un’espressione precisa ma già ariosa” (737). Preferring a feminist reading, Nozzoli suggests that “i luoghi comuni del romanzo sentimentale e piccolo-borghese, quelli stessi funerei e torbidi del postdannunzianesimo, vengono distrutti in maniera impietosa dell’apprendistato «femminista» di *Una donna*, la cui crescita avviene a spese dei tradizionali rapporti maschio-femmina” (37).
 - 10 Consult de Beauvoir, Colaïacomo, Cutrufelli, Donovan, Ellmann, Greene and Kahn, Marcuzzo, Moers, Pratt, Showalter, and Spacks for extended discussions of women writers and feminist discourse.
 - 11 See Guerricchio 90–96 for a stylistic discussion of Aleramo’s use of time, tense, and narrative levels. Guerricchio criticizes Aleramo’s shift from the present to the past tense, believing that it “dates” the text: “Si perde invece nella stesura finale, il carattere di frammenti di diario che l’uso del presente conferiva, nella prima redazione, a quelle stesse sequenze, dove il ricordo perdeva ogni funzione descrittiva per assumerne una attualizzante” (96).
 - 12 For information on the first draft of *Una donna* see Guerricchio 94–96, where specific passages are compared.
 - 13 See Pratt’s chapter “The Novel of Development” and Gardiner for discussions of the female novel of development and its relationship to psychological maturation. Also consult Showalter’s “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” in *Writing and Sexual Difference* and Garner Kahane and Sprengnether. The terms “growing up” and “growing down” are Pratt’s.
 - 14 Kolbenschlag 26. The author analyzes female myths and models of behavior through the psycho-sociological interpretation of fairy-tale figures. Kolbenschlag’s view is feminist, unlike Bruno Bettelheim’s Jungian approach.
 - 15 Susan J. Rosowski, “The Novel of Awakening,” in *The Voyage in Fictions of Female Development* 49. This book is one of a growing number of recent studies dedicated to analyzing the revision of male conventions within female narratives. On the topic of the *Bildungsroman* also consult Gilbert and Gubar. Like Pratt’s, these books focus on British and American writers. Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1856) is generally considered one of the prototypes for the “novel of awakening.” Other significant female versions of the *Bildungsroman* are Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Emma* (1816), Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853), George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* (1899), and well as Colette’s Claudine series. Aleramo would have been unfamiliar with most of these works, with the exception of Flaubert. However, Aleramo was very taken with the character of Nora in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (1879), whose spiritual ties with *Una donna* are self-evident: “sulla scena una povera bambola di sangue e di nervi si rendeva ragione della propria inconsistenza, e si proponeva di diventare una creatura umana, partendosi dal marito e dai figli, per cui la sua presenza non era che un gioco e un diletto” (151). Later in life, Aleramo would translate Madame de Lafayette’s *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), an early work dealing with female maturation, if not actually a novel of development. Among Aleramo’s Italian contemporaries, a number of novelists writing for and about women were inspired by the traditional acceptance of marriage and maternity as a woman’s ideal lot. The Marchesa Colombi’s *Un matrimonio di provincia* (1885) was directly inspired by *Madame Bovary* while Neera

- and Regina di Luanto stressed marriage, maternity, and the social role of women. Anna Franchi's polemical *Avanti il Divorzio!* (1902) mirrors some of the minor themes of *Una donna*: the legal inferiority of women and their lack of child custody rights. For more detailed information on the women writers of Aleramo's time see Morandini.
- 16 Mary Anne Ferguson, "The Female Novel of Development and the Myth of Psyche" in *The Voyage in Fictions* 228–229.
 - 17 Karen E. Rowe, "Fairy-born and human bred: Jane Eyre's Education in Romance" in *The Voyage in Fictions* 69.
 - 18 These patterns are covered separately throughout Pratt's text. A Jungian, the critic discusses Anglo-American literature but these categories are universal and applicable to all Western culture. The designations used are Pratt's. Although Spacks does not treat these archetypes as such, she does discuss them as "themes" in literature by women.
 - 19 The Jungian animus and anima could be substituted for reason and emotion, but this would be an anticipation of these categories. Aleramo employs the term intelletto when speaking of the father-figure. This antithesis of male and female is traditional and has developed into various related oppositions such as art/nature, air/water, spirit/body, etc. Ellmann offers a list of female stereotypes derived from literature that reveal Western (=patriarchal) society's prejudices. Nine of the ten attributes designated by Ellmann can be applied to the heroine's mother in *Una donna*: formlessness, passivity, instability, confinement, piety, materiality, spirituality, irrationality, and compliancy. The only exception is shrew/witch. Obviously, Aleramo's mother has internalized her culture's behavioral expectations for women. One could also conduct a Freudian analysis of the protagonist's relationship to her parents, particularly the father (a textbook Electra complex), with interesting results.
 - 20 See Guericchio's first chapter, "Cronaca e miti," for more detailed information on Aleramo's readings and early writings.
 - 21 Mazzotti 215. Besides being a feminist manifesto, *Una donna* also covers a number of central humanitarian and social issues confronting Italy at the turn of the century: the drudgery of peasant life, the mistreatment of workers, poor sanitation, the abuse of children and the elderly, the right to unionize, and the evils of prostitution. The protagonist, like Aleramo herself, is consistently on the side of the down-trodden, being a victim of social and personal abuse herself. Lino Delli Colli believes the novel was written "all'insegna di una connotazione positivista-umanitaria. Un impianto dal quale il romanzo deriva la consistenza per emblematizzarsi a simbolo del riscatto e dell'emancipazione umana e dietro il quale è da ravvisare, almeno in parte, la lezione ceniana" (227). For more information on Aleramo's social involvements see Drake.
 - 22 See Harding. Harding's Jungian interpretations of ancient myths echo the themes of Aleramo's portrayal of the mother-child rapport: "She has become identified to the son. Her personal satisfaction is found through seeking his good. Instead now, of seeking her own way, her own advantage in an open egotism, as she did before her submission to instinct in the temple marriage, she seeks the good of her child" (194) only to discover that "in the myths, [she] must always sacrifice him" (192). For more information on the nature of the mother-child relationship and maternal identity, see the special issue of *donnawomanfemme* focusing on the topic of maternity and imperialism, particularly Silvia Montefoschi's study, "Ruolo materno e identità personale. A proposito di movimento delle donne e psicoanalisi." For the link between biology and creativity, consult Commerci.

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αὐτοδίδακτος δ' εἰμί.

Libero Bigiaretti e il rapporto con l'altro ne *Le indulgenze* e ne *Il viaggiatore*

αὐτοδίδακτος δ' εἰμί, θεός δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἶμας παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν . . .
[Da me ho appreso i molteplici canti che uno spirito immortale ha ispirato nel mio petto . . .] (*Odissea*, 22.347–348). Per oltre un quarantennio la musa di Libero Bigiaretti ci ha offerto, in prosa e in poesia, un lungo canto sommesso, instancabile nell'esplorazione del modo di essere dell'uomo contemporaneo, partecipe della sua alienazione, ma sostenuto da una grande fede cartesiana nella funzione chiarificatrice e giustificatrice del pensiero che si estrinseca nelle forme della letteratura.

Testimone del suo e del nostro tempo, nella sua rigorosa disanima della condizione umana, egli si è servito di un non comune senso di osservazione e di una coscienza rarissima della capacità della parola di creare, filtrare, dissimulare, elevare o attenuare i dati della realtà. Fin dagli inizi egli ha scelto uno stile medio, levigato, capace di trarre risonanze musicali dai materiali più umili e popolari, ma scandito sempre da un gusto e da una semplicità aristocratiche.

Il punto di partenza del suo studio della condizione dell'essere dell'uomo è nell'osservazione attenta e insistente del proprio io, condizionato e definito dalle esperienze storiche, sociali, intellettuali ed emotive della sua generazione. La validità concreta di tale procedimento può derivare soltanto da un rigoroso, scientifico distacco nell'osservazione del proprio divenire,¹ visto di volta in volta come fenomeno o possibilità obiettivi. L'ironia è la manifestazione evidente del rigore del procedimento in quanto essa nasce dalla rilevazione della discrepanza tra la apparenza e la realtà, tra l'essere e il voler essere. Ciò che distingue Bigiaretti da altri scrittori che sono stati, di volta in volta i portabandiera dell'alienazione e dell'incomunicabilità, è il senso del limite concreto della sua investigazione.² Lo scrittore resta conscio dell'unica realtà che può conoscere, cioè il suo io, e ha il buon senso di non confonderlo mai con nozioni quali la società e l'ideologia, e non scade quindi nell'astrattezza, nell'enfasi, nella denuncia, e di qui, magari, nella disperazione esistenziale.

È sintomatico che la gran maggioranza dei libri di Bigiaretti siano scritti in prima persona, e che, al di là delle variazioni del contesto e delle situazioni, l'io narratore mantenga in essi unità di tono e di atteggiamento e costituisca il

filtra attraverso cui vengono percepiti e definiti gli altri caratteri, che esistono quindi soltanto in quanto entrano a far parte della coscienza stessa dell'io. Inoltre, le situazioni che si determinano, nel rapporto tra l'io e gli altri, affondano sempre le loro radici nelle esperienze concrete dell'autore, i cui dati si rifanno ad elementi biografici accertabili, ma non costituiscono perciò autobiografia quanto le componenti trascendentali della definizione del rapporto dell'io con l'altro da cui esso trae la coscienza di se stesso.³ Anche là dove Bigiaretti scrive in terza persona come in *Carlone*, una sorta di biografia paterna rivissuta come estensione del proprio io, l'io dell'autore-figlio non può esistere se non come possibilità latente ed è evidente che lo sforzo dialettico dell'io di essere l'altro si traduce nella soppressione formale dell'io.⁴

Diremo perciò che, proprio in questo sforzo appassionato con cui Bigiaretti ricerca il rapporto di significato delle proprie esperienze di uomo tra altri uomini, si manifesti un positivo slancio vitale che è, in ultima analisi, meditata accettazione della vita. Ne è chiara evidenza la facile produttività di questo scrittore senza crisi, autore di molteplici libri che, al di là degli stimoli delle mode correnti, di cui l'autore può essere stato, di volta in volta, partecipe o protagonista, si rivelano fedeli, pur nella loro evidente diversità e varietà, a quella che potremmo definire una serena *recherche* del significato che l'esistenza ha per noi stessi come atto di spontanea adesione alla vita.⁵

Senza poterci dare altro che ciò che noi possiamo trovare in noi stessi, e che l'autore ha cercato in se stesso, la coerente parabola narrativa di Libero Bigiaretti viene a porsi al di là e al di sopra delle correnti letterarie di questo quarantennio del dopoguerra. Pur testimoni di esse, i suoi libri rivelano una complessità di motivazioni tematiche che sfuggono alle etichettature dei critici, o per lo meno, le rendono quanto mai ambigue. C'è chi vede in lui soprattutto il moralista e il saggista, c'è chi ha visto in lui una specie di "romanziero d'intrattenimento" (Pampaloni 728); c'è chi lo vuole neorealista e chi realista, altri lo tacciano di autobiografismo e autodidattismo. Di lui si loda soprattutto il garbo artigianale.⁶

È un fatto però che l'ormai ingente mole critica di giudizi che si sono accumulati sia costituita, in ultima analisi, da giudizi parziali, basati su un certo numero di libri letti in un contesto particolare a confronto con altri scrittori del momento e che manchi una lettura complessiva al di là di frettolosi aggiornamenti causati dalla continua produttività dello scrittore, sempre sulla breccia ad onta dei suoi ottanta anni sonati. A tale lettura, nonostante molte recenti ristampe, osta la scarsa attenzione del pubblico e della stampa che danno l'impressione di averlo dimenticato o consegnato da tempo in una specie di olimpo degli scrittori della generazione di Pavese, alla quale egli pure ha appartenuto. Tale mancanza di popolarità era stata d'altronde prevista da Emilio Cecchi, che scriveva:

Vi sono autori che certamente godrebbero di maggiore popolarità se le loro doti fossero anche assai inferiori a quelle che effettivamente sono ma si combinassero secondo una formula nella quale fosse tenuto più conto delle preferenze e delle mode correnti.

Fra questi scrittori è Libero Bigiaretti, ai cui romanzi, nell'opinione comune, nuoce l'infusione di un tono riflessivo e quasi saggistico che non ha nulla a che vedere con le applaudite trivialità del conformismo neorealista.⁷

La necessità di un ripensamento dell'opera di Bigiaretti si impone ormai in un clima in cui, attenuatesi le preoccupazioni di impegno sociale e ormai definitivamente invecchiate le tendenze neorealistiche della nostra letteratura, il suo complesso discorso, maturato in un lungo ordine d'anni, può rivelarsi nella ricchezza dei suoi significati alla luce dei suoi ultimi e più maturi lavori. Come nel caso di Verdi, dove l'apprezzamento delle sue ultime opere ha fornito lo stimolo alla riscoperta dei suoi lavori giovanili, una lettura attenta de *Il viaggiatore*, pubblicato nel 1984, potrebbe servire a individuare, con maggior chiarezza di quanto non si sia fatto finora, le componenti fondamentali della poetica bigiarettiana, articolata in una coerente e lineare *recherche* di cui ogni libro costituisce quasi sempre un capitolo fondamentale.

Il Piscopo è stato forse l'unico a riconoscere, seppure solo parzialmente, la funzione catalizzatrice dell'io nell'opera di Bigiaretti, che egli definisce, con parole altrui, come tentativo di "trarre piacere dall'attività stessa dell'apparato psichico" (1977, 37). Con maggiore chiarezza, Bigiaretti stesso, in un'intervista concessa al Piscopo, ha detto che la motivazione alla scrittura è stata quella di cercare "principalmente di capire chi fossi e che cosa volessi" (Piscopo 1977, 9). Nozione che egli ha ripetuto recentemente alla conclusione della sua prolusione pronunciata in occasione della laurea *honoris causa* concessagli nel 1986 dall'Università di Urbino: "Ho detto cose che ho imparato mentre le pensavo e le scrivevo."⁸ Se di autodidattismo bisogna parlare a proposito di Bigiaretti, è solo in questo senso che, come nel caso di Femio, i suoi canti germinano spontanei dalla sua mente, senza essere stati appresi da nessuno. La funzione chiarificatrice della scrittura come sola possibilità e necessità di espressione dell'io è la molla che fa scattare l'attività dello scrittore, ed è la chiave della sua originalità.⁹ In questo Bigiaretti si rivela profondamente diverso da molti altri suoi contemporanei. Con tipica ironia, egli dice:

Essi hanno la parola pronta su tutto, la risposta pertinente a domande che magari nessuno propone e che, in sostanza, fondano la loro autorità su una presunzione di onniscienza e onnipresenza. . . . Essi possono, dalle colonne dei giornali, consigliare il Principe e il Gran Connestabile sul modo di esercitare i loro uffici; possono confutare o sostenere le nuove scienze umane, stabilire il tasso di sconto della Banca Nazionale della Letteratura, regolare e soprattutto deviare il corso dei Valori. Gli scrittori di cui parlo e dai quali mi allontano stupito o intimorito, sono al centro (ma in tribuna coperta) di tutto ciò che accade, ma non sono più al centro di se stessi e della responsabilità che hanno verso se stessi. (Piscopo 1977, 10)

Che cosa significa essere al centro di se stessi? Parecchi critici, tra cui il Virdia, data la facilmente riscontrabile e mai negata relazione tra persone e cose nei romanzi e i dati biografici dell'uomo Bigiaretti, parlano di autobiografismo¹⁰ senza rilevare che esso costituisce solo l'elemento necessario, ma

estrinseco alla forma poetica del romanzo e ai risultati della ricerca che esso rappresenta. Dice ancora il Bigiaretti:

Mi sembra che nei miei libri, specie nei racconti, sia sempre aperta la possibilità di uno scarto improvviso, rispetto al reale e soprattutto rispetto al punto di osservazione del reale. . . , <e tale scarto> posso supporre che sia stato provocato dagli urti sempre più violenti che ciascuno riceve dal tumultuoso corso di questi anni e dal corso dei propri anni. (Piscopo 1977, 10-11)

L'elemento autobiografico è, dunque solo la componente iniziale del processo creativo, il punto di partenza verso la ricerca dell'identificazione della realtà dell'altro da sé, nello scontro e nella rilevazione del quale, l'io acquista dialetticamente coscienza di se stesso e delle proprie potenzialità nel bene come nel male. *La scuola dei ladri* precedette nel tempo il neorealismo pasoliniano dei "ragazzi di vita," ma non fece scandalo perché Bigiaretti non ebbe alcun interesse ad anticiparne il linguaggio plebeo. Il libro descrive non tanto la vita e le azioni di uno di questi giovani criminali, quanto l'evoluzione interiore di un ragazzo come tanti in un ragazzo di vita. La validità del libro è nella verità con cui l'autore costruisce le tappe di questa evoluzione. Scritto in prima persona, non è difficile rilevare nelle esperienze del giovane descritto nel romanzo avvenimenti dell'infanzia e della prima giovinezza bigiarettiana. È molto probabile, inoltre, che molti dei personaggi e dei tipi descritti si rifacciano a persone reali e alle loro caratteristiche. Come scriverà il protagonista de *Il viaggiatore*:

Sono privo di immaginazione: non saprei inventare niente, neppure qualche supporto alla memoria. Lo so e non me ne dolgo. (10)

La verità del personaggio del giovane criminale può derivare soltanto dalla sua realtà, cioè il suo essere in sé e per sé. Per giungere a ciò, l'io autobiografico deve rivivere le proprie esperienze ricercando il punto in cui "uno scarto improvviso" avrebbe potuto creare quella deviazione, per cui l'io comincia a defluire nell'altro e le proprie esperienze diventano quelle dell'altro secondo un processo dialettico rigorosissimo in cui, rivivendo le possibilità che si aprono all'io, ad ogni scelta esistenziale deve corrispondere una conseguenza compatibile con la psicologia dell'io autobiografico, che procede a modificarsi fino a pervenire ad abbracciare la realtà dell'altro, diventando l'altro. In tal modo, la struttura narrativa, in quanto estrinsecazione di questo processo, costituisce la sua verità. Il processo creativo viene a fondarsi perciò sull'osservazione e sulle deduzioni che da essa logicamente discendono.

La differenza tra il ragazzo del "giro" di Bigiaretti e i ragazzi "di vita" di Pasolini è nel fatto che quest'ultimo, al di là di ogni altra intenzione narrativa, si limita a registrarne il comportamento per scagliarlo contro la società borghese, mentre Bigiaretti, in un atto di responsabilità verso se stesso, li scopre nel proprio essere, in quanto, per lui,

lo scrittore è un testimone . . . attendibile della realtà in cui sta vivendo o in cui (è lo stesso) immagina di star vivendo. (Baroni, 4)

Ora, la scoperta della realtà dell'altro nel proprio io non è necessariamente una scoperta piacevole; conoscere, come diceva il Petrarca, non significa amare.¹¹ Ne *Le indulgenze*, in cui si dibattono i temi dell'incomunicabilità e dell'alienazione nella società moderna, e ove con estrema precisione Bigiaretti ritrae una Roma da "dolce vita" di tipo felliniano,¹² intasata dal traffico, la problematica dell'io nei confronti dell'altro, si articola in modo diverso. Anche qui, si parte dal dato biografico.

Il protagonista ritorna dopo un'assenza di vari anni a Roma; ciò coincide con il periodo tra il 1952 e il 1965 passato da Bigiaretti ad Ivrea alla direzione dell'Ufficio Stampa dell'Olivetti. Nel romanzo, pubblicato nel 1966, l'io bigiarettiano si trasforma in un architetto interessato alla pittura, il che è solo un lievissimo travestimento dei trascorsi edili ai quali lo scrittore sembrava inizialmente avviato e dei suoi studi di pittura, sua prima vocazione. Sarebbe inoltre possibile avvertire nel libro il genuino disagio dell'autore al suo ritorno a Roma, e riconoscere forse nel personaggio di Eva Collina qualche tratto della moglie Matilde a cui il libro è dedicato.

Ma, come sempre, questi sono dati estrinseci, i parametri obbligatori in cui si muove ancora una volta l'io, questa volta nel tentativo di conciliarsi con l'altro, percepito come estraneo o nemico. Giustamente, il romanzo è, per certi aspetti, una storia d'amore, non amore romantico, dichiaratamente impossibile in una situazione alienante, ma processo di assuefazione all'altro¹³ fino all'accettazione dei suoi difetti e delle sue insufficienze, processo possibile soltanto quando la coscienza dell'altro diventa specchio dell'io.¹⁴

Nell'incontro alienante con l'altro, l'io scopre in se stesso la propria disposizione all'altro. Anche qui, uno scarto, un compromesso iniziale, l'impossibilità del rifiuto dell'altro, che sarebbe in sostanza un rifiuto della vita, la spontanea adesione alla vita, dunque, fanno di noi stessi immagine dell'altro, in cui ci riconosciamo:

Come si fa a dire che qui non sia un bel vivere? Non c'è nebbia non c'è neve; non c'è orgoglio municipale, ma la tranquilla coscienza della superiorità. Neppure a quell'ora tra notte e giorno faceva freddo. Certe volte, d'estate il ponentino trasporta in mezzo al puzzo degli autobus del centro il sale e lo jodio del mare. I romani non amano gli alberi, gli animali; verso la campagna mantengono l'antica diffidenza sempre nutrita per l'Agro malarico, ma sono confidenziali anche nell'invettiva, cordiali anche nell'indifferenza. Cresciuti all'ombra del cupolone, ricchi di indulgenze comprate a buon prezzo, sono diventati indulgenti: assolvono, perdonano, dispensano. Dopo tutto anch'io sono romano. (252)

Questa è, come negli antichi Menandro e Terenzio, la conclusione del romanzo che pare concepito in chiara opposizione a quell'altro romanzo, esteriormente simile, pubblicato una quindicina di anni prima da Cesare Pavese, *Tra donne sole*. Quest'ultimo si conclude però con un suicidio, cioè

con il rifiuto dell'altro così com'è, imperfetto ed inautentico. Alla tragedia di Pavese, Bigiaretti oppone, rinnovato da una bonaria ironia, il sorriso della commedia nuova, come unico mezzo di accettare la realtà e la vita. Ad un dato punto, ne *Il viaggiatore*, il protagonista annota nel proprio diario:

Elena non esclude che tra lui e Francesca possa esserci stato se non proprio una tragedia almeno un romanzetto, forse anche abbastanza mediocre. Una storia già tutta raccontata in mille modi . . . (32)

Aldous Huxley aveva scritto che per noi tragedia è la nostra commedia, e farsa è la tragedia degli altri. Fino a che punto, dunque è possibile accettare la realtà dell'altro e, abbracciandola, riconoscerla in noi, dato che l'alienazione, l'incomunicabilità rappresentano il momento iniziale del rifiuto dell'altro, al quale restiamo tuttavia legati indissolubilmente poiché esso dialetticamente ci determina? La conclusione de *Le indulgenze* si pone come l'interrogativo da cui prende le mosse l'ultimo libro dello scrittore marchigiano, *Il viaggiatore* appunto, ricco di spunti allegorici, come ha notato Eugenio Ragni (336).

Il titolo è il soprannome ironico di uno stravagante villeggiante, forse un po' pazzo come tutti noi, che ha "sognato" la sua vita come una serie di viaggi d'esplorazione alla ricerca della conoscenza. Emblematicamente esso può anche definire la ricerca della verità nella realtà¹⁵ operata attraverso la scrittura dall'autore. Quest'ultimo, ormai anziano, persegue anche lui un più modesto viaggio costituito da una villeggiatura nel Gargano. Come sempre, l'ambiente descritto rispecchia situazioni correnti ed esperienze personali e costituisce uno sfondo all'azione precisamente identificabile nella società del tempo. Come la Roma de *Le indulgenze* è la Roma dei primi anni sessanta, così l'albergo del Gargano rappresenta le abitudini sociali della borghesia italiana degli anni ottanta.

Pur nella sua precisa concretezza ambientale, la situazione della villeggiatura non riesce ad occultare il fatto che essa costituisce, in fin dei conti, una rappresentazione allegorica della irrimediabile brevità dell'esistenza, mentre provoca quello scarto nelle normali abitudini dell'individuo che muta improvvisamente la prospettiva dell'io. In questa prospettiva, l'anziano scrittore, la cui opera parrebbe ormai compiuta, diventa un anziano professore di storia moderna ormai pensionato, e, nonostante ambizioni e velleità di ulteriori lavori, costretto alla villeggiatura per riprendersi da un collasso. L'accompagna al Gargano la moglie, l'altra "semicoppia",¹⁶ cioè quella forma dell'altro in cui l'io ha saputo esistenzialmente specchiarsi, e che, tramite l'istituzione del matrimonio, rappresenta quel compromesso con l'altro, accettato ne *Le indulgenze* e sancito in *Due senza* per ovviare in qualche modo alla solitudine e al senso di incompiutezza dell'io.

Il libro nasce come un diario, intrapreso senza scopo per puro divertimento, ma anche per abitudine allo scrivere. Non vorrebbe essere ricerca, ma potrebbe diventarlo (abbiamo a che fare, dopotutto con un professore).¹⁷ Se vi è dunque presente un io narratore, l'oggetto del diario è l'altro, un

sedicente Commendator Loreti, più o meno della stessa età, anche lui in villeggiatura accompagnato dalla moglie Francesca, anche lui pensionato, anche lui colpito in precedenza da un collasso. Lo scrittore insiste sulle differenze inconciliabili tra i due, mentre è chiaro che sono le somiglianze nelle loro circostanze umane che fanno del diario di una casuale amicizia balneare una ricerca ossessiva, che non parrebbe a prima vista avere altro scopo che quello, piuttosto meschino e petulante, di registrare i fatti altrui.¹⁸ In tal modo Bigiaretti ironizza su se stesso e sulla sua attività letteraria, rappresentata come un divertimento, ma perseguita fino in fondo per questo ossessivo bisogno di chiarezza.

A confronto con l'altro che, per certe somiglianze, egli sarebbe incline a tollerare se non proprio ad accettare, lo scopre troppo diverso, e può solo comunicare con lui attraverso lo scontro, la schermaglia verbale, lo scherno, l'insopportazione ai quali né l'uno né l'altro possono sottrarsi, la villeggiatura avendoli posti in inevitabile contiguità. Fino a che punto, ripeto, può convivere l'io con la realtà dell'altro senza cadere nell'alienazione? Ne *Il viaggiatore*, il dissidio non si risolve, ma si attenua in quanto l'altro, partecipe, a causa delle sue innegabili somiglianze, della stessa realtà dell'io, fa sì che non sia più l'io che si specchia nell'altro, ma è l'io che è divenuto specchio dell'altro nel gioco della luce, costituendo così un altro modo di concepire ed accettare la vita, o forse, meglio, di accettare la morte.

Il professore che si fa gioco delle manie da eroico esploratore del Commendator Loreti, che dai suoi viaggi immaginari ha tratto soltanto una conoscenza da atlante enciclopedico, cioè non ha scoperto nulla, ma ha impiegato il suo tempo a coprire e a reprimere in se stesso la memoria di un episodio umiliante che ha distrutto quella che credeva fosse la sua vita, rivelandone tutta l'inconsistenza, non è, in sostanza diverso da lui. Anch'egli ha perseguito fantasmi sforzandosi di dare ad essi l'illusione della realtà. Anch'egli si è arrogato un certo senso della propria importanza ed essa si manifesta con quella stessa prosopopea che egli trova così irritante nel Commendatore. Quest'ultimo completa squallidamente la sua parabola di immaginario viaggiatore di terra e di mare cadendo dalla tolda di un comune vaporetto. Suicidio o incidente, non ha importanza. La morte lo ha, per così dire, risvegliato dalle preoccupazioni della sua solitudine.¹⁹

Qua e là, il professore, pur nella sua insopportazione per il commendatore, ne riscopre le caratteristiche in se stesso, e, a momenti, cerca di vedersi, senza poterlo fare, come egli vede l'altro. Questo specchiarsi incerto dell'altro nella coscienza dell'io trova altre momentanee corrispondenze. Le due donne, sua moglie Elena e quella di Loreti, Francesca, pur differenti fisicamente, appaiono compagne ideali dei due uomini, ma, vedendo Francesca, per caso, a seno scoperto, il professore prova per lei una forte attrazione, come se, confondendosi egli nell'immagine di lui, si sentisse ora preso logicamente anche dall'immagine della femminilità di lei, rivelata momentaneamente dalle belle forme del suo seno. Ma lo scambio, per così dire, delle mogli non può avve-

nire perché non può avvenire lo scambio dei ruoli dell'essere dei due uomini. L'io resta distinto rispetto a "la presenza inquietante" (148) dell'altro, incapace di comunicare con l'altro, ma capace, almeno per un momento, magari per caso, di riconoscere in se stesso il destino dell'altro:

Francesca ha poi consegnato a Elena una piccola foto, trovata in un cassetto, pregandola di darla a me. Per ricordo, ella ha detto. È una foto di cui non conoscevo l'esistenza; cioè scattata a mia insaputa dalla stessa Francesca: una immagine agghiacciante. Loreti e io, non in mutandine da bagno, ma in pantaloni e camicia chiari. Abbastanza simili. Siamo seduti sullo stesso sedile e perciò non si nota una grande diversità di statura, ma risultano simili se non somiglianti anche i nostri volti . . . per colpa di una congiuntura di ombre e di luminosità: la testa canuta e ricciuta di Loreti e quella mia calva nel mezzo, sotto la spietata luce a picco del mezzogiorno, appaiono uguali: bianche allo stesso modo, le ombre portate, perpendicolari, disegnano sulla mia faccia rilievi, canali e solchi abbastanza conformi a quelli di Loreti. Complessivamente, volumetricamente, Loreti appare più imponente ma, quanto a espressione fisionomica, chissà . . . Quell'impasto di luci e di ombre, di chiari e di scuri, potrebbe ingannare. (147-148)

Il culmine della lunga ricerca di Libero Bigiaretti è nell'aver riscoperto per se stesso che, riconoscendo in noi il comune destino degli altri, soltanto a questa condizione possiamo riconciliarci ad essi e a noi stessi e liberarci dall'assillo del significato della nostra presenza sulla terra. Perseguita con lo spirito scettico che caratterizza ormai la nostra epoca senza illusioni, attenuata da un'ironia che appena riesce a velarne il senso tragico, la sua conclusione ripropone sorridendo quella suprema verifica della nostra umanità che la dolorosa *σωφοσύνη* omerica aveva espresso alla fine dell'*Illiade* nell'incredibile abbraccio di Priamo ed Achille che, al di là di tutto ciò che tragicamente li separa, li riconcilia a se stessi nel riconoscimento e nell'accettazione, anche se riluttante, della necessità del dolore e della morte in cui l'altro si identifica finalmente con l'io.

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NOTE

- 1 Si veda Eugenio Ragni: "Fin dalle prime prove l'interesse precipuo di B. è rivolto a descrivere l'interiorità di un personaggio, a enuclearne con rigore, che chiameremmo scientifico se non temessimo di venir fraintesi, pensieri e reazioni psicologiche . . ." (335) e, più avanti, egli identifica ancora "l'analisi 'scientifica' dei comportamenti" come uno dei "*leit-motive* basilari della narrativa bigiarettiana" (336).
- 2 Luigi Silori aveva notato che "La contestazione della realtà non è certo 'l'impegno principale' di Bigiaretti, impegnato piuttosto a esprimere di quella realtà i contenuti via via emergenti. Non c'è nessun romanzo di Bigiaretti che affronti, per così dire, la realtà 'in toto'; non c'è in lui l'intenzione (né, forse, il fiato) di disegnare un affresco ampio ed organico della società e dei suoi modi di essere" (112-113). L'osservazione è corretta nella sostanza dei fatti, ma riflette una pregiudiziale neorealista, secondo la quale lo scrittore che non cerchi di essere

- il giudice e l'interprete di un'intera realtà sociale è, in definitiva, uno scrittore "minore," o "isolato," come il Bigiaretti è stato poi definito da Giacinto Spagnoletti (Silori 120). Con maggiore penetrazione, il Ragni dice invece che "L'analisi che B. conduce sul personaggio non si limita però a indagarne la psicologia: tesa com'è alla sfera morale, essa coinvolge anche il mondo in cui esso si forma e vive, la società che ne condiziona esistenzialmente e politicamente l'agire. Le posizioni ideologiche di B. non assumono mai, tuttavia, caratteri di polemica condotta in nome di un'astrattezza ideologica . . ." (335-336).
- 3 Autodidattismo e autobiografismo sono stati identificati da Ferdinando Virdia come "la chiave più vera e più utile" (1372) alla comprensione di quest'autore. Queste due componenti, si rivelerebbero "piuttosto nel contenuto che nella forma" (1372) Si tratta, a mio modesto parere, di termini ormai insostituibili, ma pertinenti soltanto in quanto la loro ambiguità, nel caso di Bigiaretti, costringe il critico a ridefinirli e a negarli di volta in volta. Si veda ad esempio il Silori che scrive: "Ho già detto che non credo alla vocazione autobiografica di Bigiaretti. In lui non si scorge mai quella deformazione di prospettive e di rapporti che è tipica dell'autobiografia. L'individuo, in altre parole, non è mai il centro di un mondo chiuso, non è mai determinante in modo assoluto ai fini di uno scambio e di una comunicazione con gli altri" (111).
 - 4 In *Carlone*, la vita del padre dello scrittore, Lucano, è rivissuta come riflesso del bisogno del figlio di identificarsi ed estendersi nella realtà del padre senza confondersi in essa. Il padre rimane, perciò, necessariamente l'altro; questo spiega l'uso, per la prima volta, della terza persona. Nello sforzo artistico di identificarsi nella realtà paterna, il figlio può comparire solo come possibilità indefinita nel "bambino nato e subito morto" (125) che aveva nome Spartaco, il secondo nome dello scrittore. Il romanzo, che a Giorgio Baroni pare "un caso atipico nell'itinerario narrativo bigiarettiano, per il tentativo di accostarsi o di inserirsi nel filone neorealistico" (74), rimane tuttavia nell'ambito della ricerca che l'io compie su se stesso: "Il professore aveva una breve esperienza dietro di sé, eppure, quando parlava lui, sembrava a Carlone di scoprire per la prima volta che si può prolungare la storia di se stessi giù giù fino alle origini di tutto" (159-160).
 - 5 Si veda, a tal proposito, un articolo di Niccolò Gallo apparso ne *Il Contemporaneo*, il 26 marzo 1955, citato dal Silori (119-120).
 - 6 Questi sono ormai i luoghi comuni della critica, riscontrabili un po' dappertutto.
 - 7 Citato dal Silori (115).
 - 8 Manoscritto datato 20 agosto 1986, gentilmente inviatomi dall'autore (9).
 - 9 Le parole di Femio nell'*Odissea*, citate all'inizio dell'articolo, ben si adattano a un autore spesso meccanicamente accusato di autodidattismo solo perché non aveva compiuto gli studi universitari, e ridefiniscono tale nozione nel senso di una originalità creativa che, al di là delle correnti e delle mode letterarie, nasce da un genuino bisogno di espressione. Eugenio Ragni parla giustamente di "una maturazione artistica conquistata d'intuito nell'ambito però di una rigorosa educazione letteraria" (335), mentre il Virdia asserisce che "L'autodidattismo-autobiografismo di Bigiaretti è soprattutto in questo impegno di *narrarsi per narrare*, cioè di offrire una testimonianza continua di una sua scoperta della vita attraverso una vocazione letteraria conseguita non senza fatica proprio in esperienze di vita, non nuova nella letteratura mondiale di quest'ultimo secolo, comune a Cechov, a Proust, a Joyce, a Gide, a Svevo, alla Mansfield, a Tozzi, ad Alvaro, a Brancati, a Pavese" (1375).
 - 10 La formula del Virdia, citata nella nota 9, che definisce l'autobiografismo di Bigiaretti come "*narrarsi per narrare*," per quanto utile, è solo un punto di partenza, non descrive i procedimenti specifici della narrativa bigiarettiana. Se stabilisce in essa la presenza e la funzione dell'elemento autobiografico comune a molti scrittori moderni, non ne indica chiaramente la successiva trasformazione in elemento narrativo che trascende le circostanze biografiche specifiche dell'autore. Se può essere facile riconoscere il sottofondo autobiografico della narrativa bigiarettiana, ciò è solo in quanto l'autore, in molte occasioni, non ha nascosto, a differenza di altri, la derivazione di certe situazioni nei suoi libri da quelle sue personali. La

- formula fortunata del Viridia perciò non può soddisfare proprio in quanto, nella sua genericità, può applicarsi praticamente a qualsiasi scrittore e costringe, quindi, il critico a doverla riformulare o negare. Si riveda, a questo proposito, la reazione del Silori citata nella nota 3.
- 11 Si veda il noto articolo di Giovanni Gentile (488-499).
 - 12 Il paragone con Fellini, ma con specifico riferimento a *Otto e mezzo*, è in Silori (80).
 - 13 Si veda Baldacci: "... in *Le indulgenze* ... l'intento di Bigiaretti non è di presentare l'amore come un'alternativa alla società di massa, che sarebbe un intento romantico, ma di vedere ciò che sussiste di una tale nativa disposizione dentro certi condizionamenti ambientali" (8849). Si veda anche, per una interpretazione di tono leggermente diverso, Piscopo 1979 (8845).
 - 14 Si veda ancora Baldacci: "Ed è a questo punto che il protagonista s'incontra con l'*altro da sé*. . . . I riflettori di Bigiaretti sono puntati tutti sulla situazione del suo protagonista, per sapere che cosa egli arriverà a conoscere di sé incontrandoli e scontrandosi con quella realtà che è l'*altro da sé*" (8849).
 - 15 Ne *Il viaggiatore* Bigiaretti inserisce tale motivazione nelle prime pagine del romanzo: "'Ciò che si vede' mi ha risposto 'non sempre è la realtà.' Poi ha aggiunto che secondo lui l'apparenza è solo un involucre, 'Occorre aprirlo, frugare per vedere quello che c'è dentro.' Con questa sentenza, per quanto ovvia, del Loreti il discorso è cominciato a diventare abbastanza interessante, per me. Anzi ha sfiorato un punto che ha sempre eccitato la mia mente: il rapporto tra la realtà e la verità. Non è lo stesso che dire tra apparenza e sostanza. Dal punto di vista mio, di storico: tra i fatti, le loro segrete motivazioni e il giudizio che se ne può dare più tardi" (14-15).
 - 16 La "Coppia" diventa, nel romanzo dal titolo felicemente ispirato al canottaggio, *Due senza*, l'aggregazione molecolare, biologico-esistenziale, alla quale l'uomo inevitabilmente confluisce. Col neologismo "semicoppia" (13) si definisce, quindi, la componente individuale, maschio o femmina, come atomo, per così dire, che, in ultima analisi, può esistere solo come parte di questa aggregazione.
 - 17 Si veda *Il viaggiatore*: "Devo fare attenzione a questo punto. Ammesso che io continui a scriverlo almeno per un mese, il diario di uno come me, cioè di un cosiddetto intellettuale, deve essere improntato alla coscienza del limite e alla maggiore modestia personale . . . Cesserebbe di essere un passatempo, in caso contrario; diventerebbe uno sforzo, un lavoro. Peggio, potrebbe diventare un manoscritto da pubblicare. Il che devo evitare per ragioni di decenza intellettuale" (9-10).
 - 18 Sarebbe troppo lungo elencare tutti i passi in cui l'autore si sofferma sulle somiglianze tra il professore-narratore e il Commendator Loreti. Esse traspaiono, ad una ad una, in differenti contesti, per inciso, senza che la narrazione dia loro peso, mentre si sottolinea invece il rapporto di tollerante insofferenza nei riguardi del Loreti, delineato sempre come estraneo e diverso.
 - 19 Il romanzo-diario che programmaticamente costituirebbe per il professore un *divertissement*, cioè, pascalianamente, una distrazione dalla propria condizione per concentrarsi sulle circostanze quotidiane e banali della villeggiatura, e che si pone fin dall'inizio — l'abbiamo indicato nella citazione nella nota 15 — come ricerca della verità, si svolge in un gioco continuo e appassionante di incontri e scontri tra apparenza e realtà, tra realtà e immaginazione, tra l'io e l'altro, sforzandosi di mantenere queste distinzioni in una situazione che tende a confonderle come avveniva nella famosa commedia di Calderon.

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The Written and Unwritten Worlds of Marcovaldo and Calvino

To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.

Auguries of Innocence, William Blake

With increasing frequency through the course of his writing career, in his essays, interviews and occasional articles, Calvino described the substance of his critical perceptions of the challenging but frustrating relationship between the writer and the world. On the occasion of one lecture, entitled "The Written and the Unwritten Word," he spoke specifically to one aspect of this relationship, adopting one of his typically contrastive paradigms with reference to the "discontinuity between the written page, fixed and settled, and the moving multiform world outside the page" (38–39). His consideration centered on this description by way of definition of the writer's goals and perspective, adding the further statement that the great writers are those who succeed in conveying to the reader an approach to, rather than an arrival at knowledge and thus give a precise feeling of knowledge that cannot be found elsewhere. The writer always writes about things that he does not "know," according to Calvino; therefore he writes to give the unwritten word and world a channel of self-expression through him. "Yet," he continues, "the moment my attention wanders from the settled order of the written lines to the movable complexity no sentence is ever able to hold entirely. I come close to understanding that on the other side of the words there is something words could mean." From the point of view of the reader, admiration focuses on those writers who "have built up in their works a world we feel as most meaningful, opposing it to a world they too felt lacking in meaning and perspective." Calvino definitely eschews through this dichotomy the currently popular and often exclusively hermeneutic and exegetical role of the writer-critic. This is one among the many ways in which this approach manifests the early influence of the poetics of *Neo-Realismo*, its questioning and open-ended stance reflective of one of the prime pedagogical techniques used by several of the major writer-critic practitioners of Neo-Realism, and most particularly by Vittorini and Pavese, as well as by the contemporaneous Hermetic poets.

Calvino's dilemma—man's dilemma—is that while he can find satisfaction, clarity, comfort, and control within books, in the already written word and world, he finds no such satisfaction in the wider world where all activity defies prediction, or any form of ultimate clarification. This simple but overwhelming fact establishes several of the most functional parameters of Calvino's poetics. He finds himself constrained again and again to "choose a strategy for facing the unexpected without being destroyed by it" ("The Written and the Unwritten Word" 38). A prime strategy in the service of this end is already in place, constituted by his express belief that language is a basic form of knowledge.¹ This view, which ultimately unshackles language from its traditionally viewed function as a mere tool of the creative process, has further timely implications, reaffirmed by many of his contemporaries, elegantly so in the recent statement by Joseph Brodsky: "For, while always older than the writer, language still possesses the colossal centrifugal energy imparted to it by its temporal potential, that is, by all time lying ahead" (Address). Consecratory in any logical scheme derived from this belief, it follows that language as a basic form of knowledge is endowed with the same solidity and mass as is any other reality, when and as expressed by the writer. It also follows that such knowledge always implies its own ability to expand like a temporal *Janus geminus*; its limits are unbounded. Not only does the opaque or undecipherable reality of the world offer resistance as it spirals outward, but also the repertory of "pre-words," the sources and the storehouse of the imagination, ideas and combinations of ideas that have not yet been given substance and, therefore, the status of knowledge, through language. Both Calvino and Brodsky speak to the past and future of literary expression in terms of this same temporal continuum. Their literary context may differ through their choice of genre; nevertheless, they both recall the Neo-Realists' insistence on the unitary nature of living phenomena, all contained by their cyclical rhythms and ultimately determined by those rhythms. (The simple expedient of using seasonal categories as the organizing frame for the collection, *Marcovaldo ovvero le stagioni in città*, 1963, is one of Calvino's many gestures in these stories to this truth.) If the language of external reality—the unwritten world—were to merge with the written world (Calvino suggests that this is the goal sought by some writers through a process of mimesis), no further reconciliation between the two would be necessary.

Yet, this solution will not satisfy Calvino after his experience of Neo-Realism and the unsettling events of the two previous decades of Italian socio-economic, political and cultural life. He pursues a different course: "The true challenge for a writer is to speak about the tangled mess of our century using a language so transparent that it reaches a hallucinatory level, as Kafka did" (Stille 39). Here, too, the poetics of *Neo-Realismo*, most pointedly articulated by Vittorini in his attempts to create a new attitude toward "la formazione del 'genere'" (251), informs Calvino's statement that language is a form of knowledge, and implies the humanistic aim that is inherent in his

statement. Thomas Sutcliffe expresses a similar idea when he suggests what might well be Calvino's enjoyment of the "suppositional etymology which derives the word *narrative* from the Latin *gnarus*—knowing or skilled" (921). Narration, in whatever form it has traditionally assumed—from its roots in an oral tradition, the fable and the epic, to modern prose fiction and poetry is what allows the writer possession of knowledge. It is Calvino's "fixed and settled page," or what Brodsky refers to as "the acceleration of conscience, of thinking, of comprehending the universe."

One easily recognizable and fundamental principle in Calvino's endeavor to comprehend, and a further indication of his patent debt to the Neo-Realists, is affirmation of the combinatory process that he adopts to establish multiple levels of "knowledge" in his writing. A functional critical stance constitutes always and foremost a radiating spectrum of highlights woven into the fabric of the narrative itself. Integrated throughout the twining threads of the characters' every action, the critical stratum is ultimately necessary to both the warp and woof of that fabric in order to evoke both the writer's and reader's creation and interpretation of the text. This is often announced in a manner similar to that adopted by Vittorini and Pavese. Two typical and dramatic examples appear in the first paragraphs of Vittorini's *Conversazione in Sicilia* and Pavese's *La casa in collina*, the polemic incisiveness of which is in no way diluted or mitigated by the lyric quality that animates both presentations. *Marcovaldo ovvero le stagioni in città* offers the first and parallel example among Calvino's novels. It follows this same pattern, introducing the critical bases of the entire work embedded in an early paragraph of the first of the twenty stories, "Funghi in città."² In his introduction to the volume, written for the 1966 edition in the series, *Lecture per la scuola media* (the individual stories having been written during the preceding ten-year period), Calvino indicates that the misadventures of Marcovaldo begin at the moment when "la grande ondata 'neorealista' già accenna al riflusso," and that his experiment with this type of modern fable, "di divagazione comico-melancolica," resides "in margine al 'neorealismo'" (10). At the same time, although the subject matter of Neo-Realism may now risk becoming a literary cliché, in Calvino's judgement it is no less pressing as a contemporaneous reality than it had been some twenty years earlier when the first dramatic statements of the Neo-Realist ethic appeared. Poverty, a central concern of Neo-Realism, simply has changed and expanded its locus from the rural environment to the large industrial centers. There the economic miracle still eludes the masses who have been pushed aside and discarded in favor of themes that focus instead on production and consumption. Now, as a result, "le favole ironico-melancoliche di Marcovaldo . . . si situano in margine a questa letteratura sociologica" (10).

Marcovaldo also illustrates Calvino's early approach to the creation of interrelated levels of narrative reality that challenge the "hallucinatory" without being destroyed by it. These levels are suggested through a series of

transformational possibilities, the first of which is iterated by the positing of a new beginning in each of the separate episodes, but it is a beginning that has no immediate temporal relationship to the stories that precede or follow, other than through the rubrical progression of seasons. A series of possibly related texts is then doubly suggested through the presence of the same comic protagonist and the indication of this seasonal framework. Yet, there is also a disjointed aspect to Marcovaldo's adventures; the titles—Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter—are as misleading as they are categorical. The reader may err if he assumes a chronological sequence associated with the single episodes since it is quite clear in the ages of Marcovaldo's children from one episode to the next that the stories are discontinuous. Implied chronological order is thus simply a possible signifier of form, an attempt to contain the hallucinatory. This device anticipates the correlative that Calvino will later introduce to link the several chapters of *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* where the reader is challenged at the beginning of each new chapter to readjust his perception on a Barthesian model of possible intertextual causalities.

Anticipating also the unsatisfying or unresolved conclusions to the stories of *T con zero*, Marcovaldo's incubus is the same at the beginning of each adventure as it is at the end. He is caught in the same temporal and spatial frame, having outdistanced time and space through fantasy, but he has moved ahead neither an inch nor a moment. His incubus absorbs infinite levels of displacement but it does not change as he is forced to engage in the challenge eternally with his meager arsenal of weapons. Even the specifics of this arsenal are sketchy at most. Having been established by his creator as vaguely non-urban in his orientation to the world if not in his recent origins, he must face not only the trauma of adjustment to the city ambient, for which he is ill-suited, he must confront as well the persistent and gnawing elementary needs that are a direct result of his lack of any skills whatever and thus constantly threaten his own survival and that of his large family. How does Marcovaldo face the unexpected without being destroyed by it? In the introduction, Calvino offers a partial answer: his protagonist's stolid obstinacy and his enduring non-resignation. These, however, as Calvino himself says, are only attitudes. Attitudes may be shaped by experience and convictions; they may change as experiences and convictions change. Marcovaldo's ideas seem to undergo no change or modification or any signs of conspicuous growth of consciousness, not even intuitions of new and different forms of awareness. Yet, there is something more than mere obstinacy deep within that affective part of Marcovaldo's nature that is genetically and thus unswervingly geared to survival. Obstinacy and non-resignation are external trappings, signals of the unwritten world that Marcovaldo can express in no other way than through his incoherent and awkward gestures, through his probing of what seems always to him a viscous, unseizable reality.

Survival draws Marcovaldo back again and again from the abyss of the hallucinatory, making him not only obstinate but also resilient and adaptable.

This is the unspoken lesson that his children learn from him, just as he, on occasion, learns it from his children, despite the difference between their easy acceptance and adaptation to city ways and Marcovaldo's interminable and unsuccessful struggle to comprehend those ways. "Il bosco sull'autostrada" illustrates this point, beginning with its melancholic ternary description of Marcovaldo and his family huddled before the pitifully waning warmth of the stove, in the sadly humorous *tour de force* that assigns each family member an emblematic characteristic in the format of a comic strip with its hovering balloons.³ Significantly, this is the single story in the collection in which Marcovaldo does emerge successful in his quest (relatively, because Calvino pointedly tells the reader that the pressed material of the billboards burns only too quickly). The near-sighted policeman, Astolfo, rides away, smug in his self-esteem for having interpreted the billboard's message, as he leaves Marcovaldo perched precariously on the billboard but finally if only momentarily victorious in his battle against the winter cold. As the moonlight intensifies, we hear with Marcovaldo the harsh but satisfying muted sound of the saw grating against the wood of the billboard.

The harmonious and flowing motion of things in nature, the effortless solidity of their essence, are Calvino's touchstones. When man is introduced on the scene, and with him the often unnatural and aimless acts of violence or aggression, or even natural gestures of his need to tame nature, Calvino's very vocabulary exhibits the signs of this dualism. From the inherent strength of vigorous spontaneity and certainty of being, the images shift to reflect intimations of discord and uncertainty, most often in the area of sensory imagery. The "gracchiare" of Marcovaldo's saw, like the "scorrere garrulo" of the fountain (26), and the "ronzio . . . come un raschio interminabile" (25) in "Villeggiatura in panchina," the "cigolo" (36) of the wheelbarrow that Serenella rides as Giovannino pushes it, and the deep, alarming reverberation of the gong, in "Il giardino incantato" (*I racconti* 34–38), even Biagio's writing, "zeppo di cancellature, di rimandi, di sgorbi nervosi, di macchie, di lacune," in the final paragraph of *Il barone rampante*, reflect the stridency and skirling, the imbalance, and the ill-meshed gearing that man introduces into the universe (*I nostri antenati* 406). Yet, these dissonances are also the emblem of man's liberty, of his striving for forms of expression that are uniquely his. They are his ongoing apocalypse of endurance, often his only way to rewrite the world.

There are other lessons for the reader as well as for Marcovaldo and his children in the game that Calvino is constantly playing with him and with them. One clue to playing the game successfully in *Marcovaldo* resides in ferreting out the structural formulae that Calvino imposes throughout the work. When applied to the individual stories, they reveal one of the unitary patterns of the stories. There is a moment of transition in each episode when the dulled and desperate adult and modern fantasy that constitutes the framework is lifted away to reveal the bare emotions and drives that lie further

below the surface. As the first fantasy is swept away and disappears, it is replaced by another and more primitively fabulous burst of imagination. The hallucinatory is displaced, in favor of deeper-seated tensions that do allow for simple survival, a survival which may be precarious but is nonetheless a stronger implosive force on Marcovaldo's psyche than the nightmarish quality of his existence. This tension, not the expected and usually very real *échec*, is what nurtures Marcovaldo's resistance and endurance.

"Marcovaldo al supermarket" is a prime example. Calvino refers in the introduction to its symbolic image (10), an evening's amusement for Marcovaldo and his family "window shopping" through the supermarket with no intention of purchasing anything as they have no money. In the role of *pater familias*, Marcovaldo admonishes the children to touch nothing, but he himself cannot resist the abundant riches of the supermarket aisles. He succumbs as do they. He takes a shopping cart, moves through the aisles, randomly selecting items, filling the cart, while avoiding at every turn the other members of his family, each of whom, independently and unbeknownst to the others has done the same. Marcovaldo staves off as long as he can an inevitable dissolution of his fantasy which is represented by the broad empty area at the front of the store, and the menacing cash register looming directly beyond.

Two separate moments fix the substance and significance of the transformation that takes place during this fantastic adventure. The first is associated with the mesmerizing effect that this sudden abundance has on Marcovaldo, feeding his desire to play out the fantasy to the fullest:

I suoi passi lo portavano ad addentrarsi in reparti meno frequentati; i prodotti dai nomi sempre meno decifrabili erano chiusi in scatole con figure da cui non risultava chiaro se si trattava di concime per la lattuga o seme di lattuga o di lattuga vera e propria o di veleno per i bruchi della lattuga o di becchime per attirare gli uccelli che mangiano quei bruchi oppure condimento per l'insalata o per gli uccelli arrosto. Comunque Marcovaldo ne prendeva due o tre scatole. (110)

Marcovaldo's desire for things that he knows he cannot have spurs him to take everything indiscriminately, even items he does not recognize, while it allows Calvino the opportunity to display his inventiveness in one of his typical clustered images that stretches abundance beyond hallucination in order to control it rather than be absorbed by its intensity (see Olken 105–108). The need to give vent to his overwhelming desires through this fantasy is the same need that he expresses in the first story, "Funghi in città," when he refuses to tell even his children the location of the mushrooms for fear that they might tell others, thereby reducing the crop that will be available for him and the family.

The second moment of transformation occurs when the fantasy threatens to turn ugly. There is the exit at every turn, "dove una cassiera di sentinella puntava una macchina calcolatrice crepitante come una migliatrice contro

quelli che accennavano a uscire" (112). Images of "bestie in gabbia" and "carcerati in una luminosa prigione dai muri a pannelli colorati" (112) complete the threat and increase Marcovaldo's anxiety. And then, Open, Sesame! A miraculous path of escape presents itself in the shape of a black hole in one of the walls, into which Marcovaldo, Domitilla, and the five children pass in orderly procession, each still pushing his heavily laden shopping cart. The fantasy becomes mythic but it is a myth that accommodates both a timeless and a modern world. The portentous black hole of astronomical speculation appears to these newly arrived explorers and unexpectedly spreads out before them a star-studded sky. It contains other illumination as well: sparks from electric trams, brightly lit windows, neon advertising signs, and the red warning lights of radio station antennas. The family has walked out onto open scaffolding prepared for the building of an addition to the supermarket. The fantasy comes to its symmetrical and logical conclusion in the final image of the crane looming overhead with its open maw: "Era una bocca enorme, senza denti, che s'apriva protendendosi su un lungo collo metallico . . . Calava su di loro, si fermava alla loro altezza, la ganascia inferiore contro il bordo dell'impalcatura" (112-113). This is a fantasy that Marcovaldo can understand, atavistically, effortlessly. He knows immediately what he must do. Sacrifice, propitiation to the ravenous, demanding god is carried out silently, with neither hesitation nor instruction to the other family members. Marcovaldo approaches the gaping mouth, empties his cart into it, and as each other family member empties his own cart into the awaiting jaws and passes on in turn, there remains only an ironic reminder of Marcovaldo's problematic place in the urban universe, "le scritte luminose multicolori che invitavano a comprare prodotti in vendita nel grande supermarket" (113).

"Il coniglio velenoso" and "La fermata sbagliata" illustrate variations of the same procedure. In the first of these two stories, the frowsty, antiseptic smell of the hospital ward, the bars of the hospital bed, like the lights and sounds of the unattainable outside world, trigger Marcovaldo's double fantasy when he discovers the caged laboratory rabbit: "E lo guardava con l'occhio amoroso dell'allevatore che riesce a far coesistere la bontà verso l'animale e la previsione dell'arrosto nello stesso moto dell'animo" (70-71). A pellucid fantasy then takes over Marcovaldo's mind; "gli umidi muri di casa sparivano e c'era una fattoria verde tra i campi" (72), only to dissolve again swiftly after the escape of the rabbit. Its freedom is short-lived, as is Marcovaldo's vision, both abruptly truncated by an oppressive and pitiless society that prompts Calvino to write in these last two pages of the episode the harshest passage of the book (78-79). Just as the rabbit is frustrated in its attempt to die rather than face capture, and is scooped up to be returned to its cage, Marcovaldo is caught in the same gloved and sterile hands of the institutional numen, his fate, too, at the mercy of these impersonal gods of the city.

Another of Marcovaldo's sources of evasion is the fantasy afforded him by the large screen films in color at the cinema, "che permette d'abbracciare i più

vasti orizzonti: praterie, montagne rocciose, foreste equatoriali, isole dove si vive coronati di fiori" (80). This most familiar modern form of escape, the subject of "La fermata sbagliata," is introduced as the antidote "per chi ha in uggia la casa inospitale" (80), and fulfills Marcovaldo's need, except on this particular night when the cold, grey drizzle, the dense fog, and the depressing thought that he will never really experience these wonders cause the splendor of the film's images to fade abruptly and lose their power. Almost simultaneously, however, the dense fog that fills the streets begins to cancel out all signs of the external world and Marcovaldo is enveloped in a second, unexpected fantasy of liberation. The fog is a protective blanket around him; he is prey to no external stimulus and he can literally dream with his eyes wide open and project anew the desired images of the film he has just seen, "che . . . si svolgeva nelle foreste dell'India: dal sottobosco paludoso s'alzavano nuvole di vapori, e i serpenti salivano per le liane e s'arrampicavano alle statue d'antichi templi inghiottiti dalla giungla" (80). He moves through unrecognizable streets, wanders into a café, then back out into the streets and finally to an entirely unfamiliar cityscape. Here he is confronted with total disorientation in a transformational passage through a world much like that of the unfamiliar maze of aisles of the supermarket or that of the enclosed and concentrated signs of suffering that he sees in the hospital where he is equally depressed and frustrated by "la nebbia che c'era fuori e che dava l'idea di doversene uscire nel vuoto, di sfarsi in un umido niente" (70). The hovering threat of annihilation is ever present for Marcovaldo. When he finds himself aboard an airplane, instead of a city bus, and bound for Bombay, Calcutta, and Singapore, all the exotic and mysterious places suggested to him by the film, the transformation is complete. Marcovaldo, and Calvino, have been borne aloft by a modern Pegasus but, unlike Calvino, Marcovaldo is also its captive.

He is also captive to an historical ideal gone sour. His lack of success in his vain search for identification with a nature that no longer exists for him (and Calvino suggests ironically that it probably never did) is expressed thematically in each of the episodes through the tension, the opposition of his desires, and the wretchedness of his daily existence. Even his eldest son, Michelino, echoes Calvino's cynical attitude toward the idea of a lost pastoral and idyllic existence when he returns home after a stint of summer work as a cowherd ("Un viaggio con le mucche"). Marcovaldo envisions his son's enjoyment and envies him this time spent in the mountains, in the open air, far from the invasive and unpleasant city sounds, "l'anonimo frastuono dei motori," "un russare dai piani di sopra," "l'orchestra delle sveglie nelle case operaie" (63). Michelino, however, destroys his father's fantasy almost immediately when he pungently complains of the long hours of hard work and low wages, adding that he has no intention of giving any of his meager earnings to his father. The rubrical categories of five series of seasonal stories are an ironic formal frame for this element of Marcovaldo's imagined odyssey,

as the herd now continues to move off through the streets, "portandosi dietro i menzogneri e languidi odori di fieno e suoni di campani" (68). Even the implication of repetition of nature's cycles affords only the slightest touch of optimism.

The search for identification with history is even more perfunctory, emblemized in the nugatory appearance of another set of even more pointedly ironic rubrics: the names assigned to almost all the characters, from Marcovaldo and Domitilla to those who appear only once in a single episode. They bear proud, high-born but anachronistic names that should evoke images of chivalric exploit and romance, mediaeval bravery and heraldic blazons. Instead, la signora Diomira, the neighbor, is known for her talent at killing and skinning animals for the pot; il cavalier Ulrico, *vecchio cacciatore*, is the tenement sharpshooter; Sigismondo is a *disoccupato*; Guendalina, a washerwoman; Tornaquinci, *il vigile notturno*. Similarly, Amadigi, Astolfo, Fiordaligi, il signor Viligelmo, and il dottor Godifredo, these last two who hold the exalted position of *caporeparto* and *agente di pubblicità luminosa*, respectively. Their names are all that remains of an heroic and idealized dream. The desperation of Marcovaldo's defeat is glossed over through the expedient of madcap and bumbling high jinks when nature refuses to respond gently to his muted entreaties. History responds out of the side of its mouth, with a satiric intonation of distortion in its enunciation of ill-fitting labels. Marcovaldo's children (Michelino, Pietruccio, Filippetto, Isolina and Teresina) and even the young son of the wealthy family in "I figli di Babbo Natale," Gianfranco, are the only ones to escape such anomalous names, offering another small and benignly optimistic contrast to their elders. They may have a better chance to pen the outlines of their own fate on the blank page.

Calvino's anti-theoretical attitude is another constant which took two complementary forms throughout his career: first, a consistent rejection of the efficacy of any and all contemporary comprehensive "theories" of literature that dates from the time of his early essays; and, second, the specifically critical thrust of all his metanovelistic narratives and several among his eristic introductions to those narratives (notably, *Le città invisibili*, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* and the introduction to *I nostri antenati*).⁴ The *Marcovaldo* introduction situates itself in this context both as precursor to Calvino's anti-deconstructivism and as example of a simplified statement of the several levels at which the narrative may function simultaneously, in this particular case, in the guise of explication to a "young" audience, determined by the specific edition of the work.⁵ The ironic prefatory note to the introduction immediately elevates the prospective readers' acumen above professorial humbuggism and need for a prepared textual explication: "Prefazione un po' seria e un po' noiosa d'un libro che non vuol essere tale, ragione per cui i nostri lettori possono benissimo saltarla (ma se qualche professore volesse leggerla, vi troverà alcune istruzioni per l'uso)" (5). Particularly in the ear-

lier part of his career, Calvino rarely passed up an opportunity for a gentle nose-thumbing at the critics.

Suteliffe points out that even more than Borges and Pynchon, Calvino's fiction invites the attention of literary theorists, whose language he often spoke and whose preoccupations he always shared. Several of these preoccupations are already manifest in this early work. "Luna e Gnac" in its intricacy of semiotic symbolism and, at the same time, in its simplicity of presentation immediately invites such attention. Another of the stories equally concerned with these same issues has received, however, minimal mention. "La città smarrita nella neve" posits a particular aspect of the relationship between the written and the unwritten world, between the ordered reality of the fixed, opaque landscape of the city and the possibilities for reshaping it according to the needs of the imagination. A blanket of new snow has obliterated all sign of the city's outlines, all concrete objects. For the first time Marcovaldo "era diventato padrone di camminare in mezzo alla strada, di calpestare le aiuole, d'attraversare fuori delle linee prescritte, di avanzare a zig-zag" (32). The city may well have become a different and freer place, and Marcovaldo daydreams of losing himself within it, anticipating the significance of the simile of the blank page which appears in the last paragraph of "I figli di Babbo Natale" as the final invitation to uncertainty for both writer and reader: "Si vedeva solo la distesa di neve bianca come questa pagina" (148). However, habit, the nemesis of creativity, guides his steps to his workplace. The barrier represented by familiarity is for the moment stronger than the imagination, although Marcovaldo, spurred on by his immediate fantasy, does take up his shovel almost willingly: "Spalar neve non è un gioco, specie per chi si trova a stomaco leggero, ma Marcovaldo sentiva la neve come amica, come un elemento che annullava la gabbia di muri in cui era imprigionata la sua vita" (33). The blanket of snow serves the same function as the fog in "La fermata sbagliata" to predictably provoke the transformational fantasy. From his vague wish to erase the configuration of the city as he knows it, Marcovaldo's first desire for escape and evasion gives way to the more critically inventive urge to recreate, refashion the city—to rewrite the world as he would have it. "Rifare la città, ammucciare montagne alte come case, che nessuno avrebbe potuto distinguere dalle case vere. O forse ormai tutte le case erano diventate di neve, dentro e fuori; tutta una città di neve con i monumenti e i campanili e gli alberi, una città che si poteva disfare a colpi di pala e rifarla in un altro modo" (34–35). The possibilities for rewriting the world are infinite. Marcovaldo not only refashions the city, he becomes a part of it, one of his creations, as a mountain of cascading snow from the rooftops falls down upon him and gives him the contours of a nearby snowman made by a group of children. He is suborned momentarily and given new outlines as an integral part of a candid, refreshed world but only momentarily. His sneeze, precipitating a whirlwind that sucks up every flake of snow and draws it skyward, leaves Marcovaldo in the drab, familiar courtyard with its hostile,

sharp corners and grey walls, his brief moment of creativity ended. But he has had a moment.

In addition to his theorizing comments in the introduction to *Marcovaldo*, Calvino further invites theoretical attention through the changing levels of symbolism of the various stories, through playful experimentation with the comic and maladroit anti-hero ("l'ultima incarnazione di una serie di candidi eroi poveri-diavoli alla Charlie Chaplin" [5]) who is a new phenomenon in Italian literature, in the still little cultivated fictional sub-genre of humorous fiction, and, finally, in the implication that Marcovaldo's significance goes far beyond the befuddled and awkward gestures which express his rough grasp of the world that presses in around him. Marcovaldo is a comprehensive symbol of a newer form taken by the lower class. As a class, it is inchoate, as defenseless—and as indestructible—as century-old generations of its hinterland counterparts who were finally given first voice and substance by Verga eighty years earlier. Other more recent and expanded literary echoes of that voice also resound, through the choruses of the poor in novels from Federico Tozzi and Corrado Alvaro to Carlo Levi and Ignazio Silone. Alberto Moravia's thesis appears as a coda, in his numerous essays, perhaps most succinctly in "L'uomo come fine," written in 1946, and in the later essay, "I miei problemi," of 1962. These essays serve as counterpoint to Calvino's *Marcovaldo* introduction. The rampant Machiavellianism that Moravia decries as late as the early 1960's in open and direct polemic demonstrates the intensity of the Neo-Realist ethic that still retained critical viability: "Il mondo moderno è convinto che soffrire sia esistere, che il dolore sia la prima e ultima prova dell'esistenza, come incapacità. Ma questo si otterrà soltanto strappando l'uomo al suo presente impiego di mezzo e restaurando la sua natura di fine" (239). Marcovaldo's alienation is of this same order.⁶

It is, however, an alienation of a completely different stamp. The violence of historical and sociological realities is masked and swathed in layers of comic padding. Only rarely does the starkness of the lonely and desperate struggle for survival emerge in the foreground, as in the single third paragraph of the first story, "Funghi in città" (15); in the transparent allegorical tale of the hare and the wolf that comprises the seven short paragraphs at the end of the last story, "I figli di Babbo Natale" (148); and in the infected rabbit's resignation to death, in "Il coniglio velenoso" (78). Situated between these are the ill-coordinated and nervously darting movements of Marcovaldo and the ebullient caprioles of his children. Domitilla adds her hectoring comments as a running dose of domestic gloom, while the daughters appear only infrequently and statically to play out their stereotyped ingenuousness and, in the case of Isolina, adolescent and romantic dreaming. All resemble familiar stock characters acting out their assigned roles through a succession of romps and capers, *lazzi* and *doti*, in a *commedia dell'arte* scenario. It is their presence as *family members* that fleshes out their identity and captivates the reader with simple domestic truths purveyed most often by the children,

while it underlines the heavy burdens and responsibilities of Marcovaldo.

In one sense, *Marcovaldo* is a “fable for our times” in the manner of James Thurber, as it focuses alternately on Marcovaldo and his children, setting the experiences of the two succeeding generations against each other in its series of bemused and often pathetic episodes. Each contains a fantasy of desire and defeat, and a final transformation of the fantasy that raises it to levels above and beyond the hallucinatory mechanisms of the industrial metropolis. The written world lies heavily below in the arena of the large city, fixed in its human records of urban progress and decay. If Calvino accepts the written reality of the city in its historical function and its inspirational power in the modern world, he also demands that the silences of all the unwritten records be given their vital living space, as well. It is ultimately, and not surprisingly, natural phenomena—drizzling rain, fog, and snow—that Calvino chooses to introduce his paradoxical images and signal these moments of quiescence. The winter snow, particularly, emerges as the most effective, most transparent symbol of these silences, of these pauses for the nurturing of undistracted imagination. It covers the city with a silent clarity, and appears finally in the countryside at the end of the last story, just as the wind had arrived from afar in the first story, levelling and smoothing over all the tracks that have ever been made before, to open the way for both the hare and the wolf to set out again and again across an eternally empty page.

NOTES

- 1 “I believe more and more in literature as a language that says things that other languages can’t say, that literature has full status as a form of knowledge” (Stille 38).
- 2 “Aveva questo Marcovaldo un occhio poco adatto alla vita di città: cartelli, semafori, vetrine, insegne luminose, manifesti, per studiati che fossero a colpire l’attenzione, mai fermavano il suo sguardo che pareva scorrere sulle sabbie del deserto. Invece, una foglia che ingiallisse su un ramo, una piuma che si impigliasse ad una tegola, non gli sfuggivano mai: non c’era tafano sul dorso d’un cavallo, pertugio di tarlo in una tavola, buccia di fico spiacciata sul marciapiede che Marcovaldo non notasse, e non facesse oggetto di ragionamento, scoprendo i mutamenti della sua esistenza” (*Marcovaldo* 15–16).
- 3 “There are moments when Marcovaldo as a character is not far from the famous (in Italy) character of Sor Pampurio, a classic comic strip published many decades ago by the first national magazine of comics, *Il corriere dei piccoli*” (La Polla 40).
- 4 The introduction to *I nostri antenati* was written in June, 1960, and appeared in the first re-issue of the three novels of the trilogy (*Il visconte dimezzato*, 1952; *Il barone rampante*, 1957; and *Il cavaliere inesistente*, 1959) in a single volume bearing the new title.
- 5 “Libro per bambini? Libro per ragazzi? Libro per grandi? Abbiamo visto come tutti questi piani continuamente si intreccino. O piuttosto libro in cui l’Autore attraverso lo schermo di strutture semplicissime, esprime il proprio rapporto, perplesso e interrogativo, col mondo? Forse anche questo” (*Marcovaldo* 11).
- 6 Marcovaldo’s ragged and constantly frustrated attempts to insert himself in a culture based on production and consumption exemplifies Moravia’s earlier statement in the same essay: “Di conseguenza adoperare l’uomo come mezzo deriva dal non porsi l’uomo come fine ossia dal non avere rispetto dell’uomo, vale a dire dal non sapere che cosa sia l’uomo e dal non avere una chiara e sufficiente idea dell’uomo” (207).

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Linguistic Patterns and Internal Structure in Five *canti* of the *Inferno*

Lloyd Howard

When Dante meets Ciacco in *Inferno* VI he is curious to find out whether the political worthies of the early and mid-thirteenth century, Farinata degli Uberti, Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, Iacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo¹ and Mosca de' Lambertini also reside in Hell or if they have been saved. With Ciacco's response that they are all in Hell, much deeper down than Ciacco, the reader is prepared for a group of episodes which will delineate these individuals as politicians. While it is obvious to the readers of the *Divine Comedy* that these individuals comprise a group because they are defined as such in *Inferno* VI, it is the thesis of this study that they are more of a group than had previously been realized.

The poet adopts formulas of linguistic repetition from one pertinent episode to the next and in so doing he accentuates their links in an indisputable yet not readily apparent manner. He introduces words or phrases in *Inferno* 6 which are repeated in the Farinata episode in *Inferno* 10, or in *Inferno* 16 with Tegghiaio and Iacopo. Then in a further instance when Dante meets Catalano and Loderingo in *Inferno* 23 linguistic formulas are also present. This encounter between Dante and the two hypocrites in *Inferno* 23 is the only one which *Inferno* 6 does not anticipate. Why were they not mentioned in *Inferno* 6? Because they were neither "degni" nor did they put their minds to "ben far"² when they ruled Florence. Yet the presence of linguistic formulas here signals that the two souls are to be juxtaposed with the souls in the other *canti*.³ Finally, linguistic formulas are adopted which link the Catalano and Loderingo episode with *Inferno* 28 where Dante meets the last of the souls named back in *Inferno* 6, Mosca de' Lambertini.

Early on in Dante's encounter with the glutton Ciacco, Dante does not recognize him, due to his *contrapasso*, and asks:

"Ma dimmi chi tu se' che 'n sì dolente
loco se' messo, e hai sì fatta pena,
che, s'altra è maggio, nulla è sì spiacente."⁴

(6.46-48)

The poet repeats the verb "dire" plus the interrogative "chi" plus the "tu se" in two other *canti*.⁵ It is used in *Inferno* 16, with only one variation: *dir* < *dimmi*, when Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, Iacopo Rusticucci and Guido Guerra (not mentioned by Dante in *Inferno* 6) wish to understand Dante's identity. Iacopo begins:

. . . "Se miseria d'esto loco sollo
rende in dispetto noi e nostri prieghi,"
cominciò l'uno, "e 'l tinto aspetto e brollo,
la fama nostra il tuo animo pieghi
a *dirne chi tu se'*, che i vivi piedi
così sicuro per lo 'nferno fregghi."

(16.28–33)

In *Inferno* 23 Catalano and Loderingo also want Dante to identify himself:

Poi disser me: "O Tosco, ch'al collegio
de l'ipocriti tristi se' venuto,
dir chi tu se' non avere in dispregio."

(23.91–93)

What does this pattern of thematically unimportant words,⁶ repeated in *Inferno* 6, in *Inferno* 16 and in *Inferno* 23 communicate to the reader? It signals that these episodes are more closely linked than can be gleaned from Dante's words to Ciaccio alone, because a version of "dire" plus "chi" plus "tu se" in this pattern is unique to these three *canti* in the *Divine Comedy*.

Further on in *Inferno* 6 Ciaccio answers Dante by identifying himself:

"Voi cittadini mi chiamaste Ciaccio:
per la dannosa colpa *de la gola*,
come tu vedi, a la pioggia mi fiacco.
E io anima trista non son sola,
ché tutte queste a simil pena stanno
per simil colpa." E più non fé *parola*.

(6.52–57)

I draw the reader's attention to the genitive "de la gola" which ends line 53. Dante repeats this exact formula in *Inferno* 23 when Catalano and Loderingo with considerable curiosity observe Dante:

mi rimiraron senza far *parola*;
poi si volsero in sé, e dicean seco:
"Costui par vivo a l'atto *de la gola*;
e s'e' son morti, per qual privilegio
vanno scoperti de la grave stola?"

(23.86–90)

Dante employs this formula of repetition in only these two *canti* in the *Inferno*. Furthermore, in both cases the "gola" rhymes with another substan-

tival verse terminator "parola" in *Inferno* 6.57 and in *Inferno* 23.86. "De la gola" cannot be considered a thematic signifier since in Ciaccio's episode "gola" means gluttony while Dante's "gola" in *Inferno* 23 simply refers to his throat. I would rather talk in terms of circumstantial contexts, that is the use of the "gola" references as identifiers. In *Inferno* 6 the pattern, "de la gola" mobilizes Ciaccio into identifying himself and in *Inferno* 13 (again accompanied by "dire chi tu se'") it impels Dante to do the same.

Ciaccio concludes his dialogue with Dante by stating his desire to be remembered when Dante returns to the world above:

"Ma quando tu sarai *nel dolce mondo*,
priegoti ch'a la mente altrui mi rechi:
più non ti dico e più non ti rispondo."

(6.88-90)

The locative "nel dolce mondo" is repeated in *Inferno* 10 when the heretical Farinata refers to Dante's return to the only world that matters, the "sweet world" above:

"E se tu mai *nel dolce mondo* regge,
dimmi: perché quel popolo è sì empio
incontr' a' miei in ciascuna sua legge?"

(10.82-84)

Thematically the passages are parallel. In each case a sinner is speaking to Dante with reference to his return to the world above, and in each case the contraction plus adjective plus noun pattern, "nel dolce mondo," is employed, a pattern which is unique to these two episodes in the *Divine Comedy*.

The poet ties *Inferno* 6 more closely to *Inferno* 10 when five lines past "nel dolce mondo" in *Inferno* 6, just before Ciaccio falls back to where the other "ciechi" suffer, Dante describes Ciaccio's last sight of the wayfarer:

Li diritti occhi torse allora in biechi;
guardommi un poco e poi chinò la testa:
cadde con essa a par de li altri ciechi.

(6.91-93)

The poet repeats the exact same pattern, "guardommi un poco e poi," in *Inferno* 10. However the function of each formula is different. In *Inferno* 6 the formula closes the episode with Ciaccio now silent, while in *Inferno* 10 the formula opens the Farinata episode:

Com'io al piè de la sua tomba fui,
guardommi un poco, e poi, quasi sdegnoso,
mi dimandò: "Chi fuor li maggior tui?"

(10.40-42)

The particular pattern of this repetition, unique in the *Divine Comedy*, is

striking in its length and structure. It is the longest of its kind among the ones analyzed in these *canti*, as well as the most intricate (verb plus object pronoun plus indefinite article plus adverb plus conjunction plus adverb). The proximity of a second "un poco" in both cases, *Inferno* 6.102 and *Inferno* 10.45, is also worthy of notice.

As no other formulas of repetition are inaugurated in *Inferno* 6, I draw the reader's attention to links between the other pertinent *canti*.

When Farinata overhears a fellow Tuscan traversing Hell while still in the flesh, he addresses him with the vocative:

"O Tosco che per la città del foco
vivo ten vai così parlando onesto,
piacciati di restare in questo loco."

(10.22-24)

The only other occasion in the *Divine Comedy* when "O Tosco" is adopted occurs in *Inferno* 23 when Catalano and Loderingo address Dante and wish to know his identity. They begin their address as Farinata had already done with "O Tosco":

Poi disser me: "O Tosco, ch'al collegio
de l'ipocriti tristi se' venuto,
dir chi tu se' non avere in dispregio."

(23.91-93)

The vocative "O Tosco" is the first pattern of repetition in this study whose significance has thematic import with explicit bearing on the action of these encounters, in so far as they deal with Florentine leaders.

In *Inferno* 16 when Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, Iacopo Rusticucci and Guido Guerra recognize a fellow Tuscan by his attire they shout after Dante to stop:

A le lor grida il mio dottor s'attese;
volse 'l viso ver' me, e "Or aspetta,"
disse, "a costor si vuole esser cortese.
E se non fosse il foco che saetta
la natura del loco, i' dicerei
che meglio stesse a te che a lor la fretta."

(16.13-18)

The imperative "aspetta," along with Virgil's "disse," is repeated in *Inferno* 23. When Catalano and Loderingo hear that Dante is Tuscan and one of them requests that he slow down, again Virgil reacts:

Onde 'l duca si volse e disse: "Aspetta,
e poi secondo il suo passo procedi."
Ristetti, e vidi due mostrar gran fretta
de l'animo, col viso, d'esser meco;
ma tardavali 'l carico e la via stretta.

(23.80)–84)

In each canto the past remote "volse" is adopted, then the past remote "disse," which follows the imperative in *Inferno* 16 and precedes it in *Inferno* 23, with the imperative "aspetta" as the verse terminator both times. Furthermore, the "aspetta" rhymes with the same verse terminator, "fretta," in both *Inferno* 16.18 and *Inferno* 23.82. There is not another instance in the *Divine Comedy* when the imperative "aspetta" is used by Virgil or Beatrice to request that Dante stop.

Just after the "aspetta" in *Inferno* 16, when Tegghiaio, Iacopo and Guido reach Dante and Virgil, the poet adopts the plusperfect of the verb "giungere," preceded by "quando":

Ricominciar, come noi restammo, ei
l'antico verso; e *quando* a noi *fuor giunti*,
fanno una rota di sé tutti e trei.

(16.19–21)

In *Inferno* 23 the moment is described when Catalano and Loderingo reach Dante and Virgil and again the plusperfect of "giungere" is employed, preceded by "quando":

Quando fuor giunti assai con l'occhio bieco
mi rimiraron senza far parola;
poi si volsero in sé, e dicean seco . . .

(23.85–87)

The duplication of this formula in the *Divine Comedy* is unique to these two *canti*.

And what of Mosca de' Lamberti in *Inferno* 28? In a brief passage he presents himself:

E un ch'avea l'una e l'altra man mozza,
levando i moncherin *per l'aura fosca*,
sì che 'l sangue faceva la faccia sozza,
gridò: "Ricordera'ti anche del Mosca,
che disse, lasso! 'Capo ha cosa fatta,'
che fu mal seme per la gente *tosca*."

(28.103–108)

The formula "per l'aura fosca" occurs in only one other instance in the *Divine Comedy* and that is in *Inferno* XXIII when one of the two hypocritical politicians recognized a fellow Tuscan, and here too it is a verse terminator:

E un che 'ntese la parola *tosca*,
di retro a noi *gridò*: "Tenete i piedi,
voi che correte sì *per l'aura fosca*!"

(*Inferno* XXIII. 76–78)

In both cases the "per l'aura fosca" rhymes with the feminine adjective "tosca," which is unique to these two *canti* in the *Divine Comedy*. As well, in each passage the past remote "gridò" is used with reference to one who "shouted" in order to gain the attention of Dante and Virgil. While the very common form "gridò" is seen on numerous occasions throughout the *Divine Comedy*, the "gridò," used as a *verbum dicendi* in the Catalano and Loderingo episode, is not repeated again until it is used to introduce: "Ricordera'ti anche del Mosca," some five *canti* later.

In retrospect two types of formulas of repetition have been singled out in these *canti*. We have seen those with thematic significance such as "O Tosco," "tosca," and "nel dolce mondo" where the repetition indicates sinners still obsessed with their political life, that worldly life which had centered around Florence and which ultimately accounted for their spiritual downfall. Then there are the other more hidden formulas of repetition such as "dir chi tu se'," "de la gola," "guardommi un poco e poi," "aspetta," "fuor giunti," and "per l'aura fosca" which function as linguistic signals. These seemingly banal signals are subtle clues, hitherto overlooked, to *canti* links as well as to some as yet little explored sides of the medieval mind that forged them.

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NOTES

- 1 Dante does not encounter Arrigo in the *Inferno* nor is there agreement among Dante scholars as to his identity. He will not be referred to again in this study.
- 2 "Ben far" reoccurs in *Inferno* 15.64 when Brunetto Latini refers to the kind of politics Dante practices. Dante, like the five politicians mentioned in *Inferno* 6, tried to be loyal to Florence over and above factional politics.
- 3 For further information on the relationship between Catalano and Loderingo and the three politicians in *Inferno* 16 see Howard.
- 4 All quotations of the *Divine Comedy* are taken from *La Commedia a cura di Giorgio Petrocchi*. The italics are mine.
- 5 The concordance used in this study is Lovera.
- 6 "Unimportant" that is to the key concern here which is political hypocrisy.

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Machiavelli's Use of *Umore* in *The Prince*

Anthony Parel

Machiavelli's use of the concept of *umore* is a neglected area of scholarly research.¹ His use of other key terms such *virtù* (Price, "The Senses of *Virtù*"; Plamenatz), *fortuna* (Flanagan), *ordini* (Whitfield), *gloria* (Santi; Price, "The Theme of *Gloria*"), *liberty* (Colish), and *stato* (Hexter) has been carefully studied, and Machiavelli scholarship has benefitted greatly from it. What I undertake to do here is initiate a comparable analysis of his use of *umore*.

Umore is originally a medical term defining the constitution of the human body, human health and temperament.² The four humours—blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile—according to ancient medicine were thought to be the constitutive elements of the human body. Each humour possessed a quality opposed to that of every other humour. But when they were mixed according to a due proportion, as in the human body, they produced health. Sickness, in turn, was understood as an imbalance in the humoral relationship, i.e. a state in which one humour as it were sought to dominate all the other humours. The science of medicine was the science of treating the humoral imbalance, of keeping the due proportion of each humour in the body.

Every student of Machiavelli knows that he viewed the science of medicine as an exemplary science for politics: "In the illnesses that men suffer from, they ever have recourse to the judgements or to the remedies that have been pronounced or prescribed by the ancients . . . and medicine is nothing other than the experiments made by the ancient physicians."³ He spoke of "bodies of men" and of the practice of "purging the humours" that doctors recommend (3.1:195); of "strong medicine"; of what "physicians say of consumption"; of the need for "early diagnosis" of political illnesses (*The Prince* 3:259–60). A famous character in *Mandragola*, Callimaco, was a doctor of medicine, trained in Paris. The discussion of Machiavelli's use of *umore* should be placed against the background of his knowledge of contemporary medicine and its assumed exemplary character for politics.⁴

In his writings he uses *umore* in two senses: as applying to the understanding of the health and the temperament of the individual, and as applying to the health and structure of political society or body politic. There are some fifty instances of the use of the term in his political writings—far too many to be adequately treated within the limits of one paper. I have therefore limited the scope of this paper to its use in *The Prince* alone.

Umori occurs only in two chapters of *The Prince*: chapter 9, where the civic principality is analysed, and in chapter 19 where the ethical question of avoiding hatred and contempt is discussed. Thus it occurs once in the section devoted to the structural aspects of principalities (chapters 2–11), and once in the section devoted to the ethical behaviour of the princes (chapters 15–19). The paucity of the use in *The Prince*, however, should not be interpreted as an indication of any unimportance of the concept for understanding Machiavelli's political theory. For *umori* is used in *The Prince* not rhetorically but theoretically. That is to say, it is used as a means of enunciating a general theory of the structure of the body politic, especially principalities. And since the structure of the body politic, according to Machiavelli, has implication for the ethical rules applicable to rulers, it follows that the use of *umori* in *The Prince* has also some important ethical consequences. In other words the theory of *umori* connects both the structural and ethical issues of the book.⁵

II. *Umori* as Applied to the Body Politic

The idea of *umori* is first introduced in the context of the discussion of civic principalities. A civic principality is a "new" principality in which the prince needs the support of its social classes, the *grandi* and the *populo*, to come to power and to maintain it. The *grandi* and the *populo*, in their turn, need the support of the prince if they are to satisfy their separate and opposed interests. Thus there is a necessary mutual dependence of the princes and the social classes. But almost as soon as he has stated this interesting theory, he seems to realize that this relationship is only one instance of a more general relationship, according to which every political regime has a particular mode of relationship between the ruling element and the social classes. And he uses the term *umori* to convey this point. In other words, there is a theory of political humours, which applies not only to civic principalities, not only to principalities in general, but also to the political regime as such:

To such a principality a man rises with the aid of either the *populo* or of the *grandi*, for in every city these two opposing humours exist. The civil principality originates thus: the *populo* desire not to be dominated and oppressed by the *grandi*; the *grandi* desire to dominate and oppress the *populo*. From these two opposed appetites, one of three effects is born in the city: principality, liberty (republic) of *licenzia* (oligarchy). (*The Prince* 3:271)

With characteristic brevity Machiavelli has packed a number of important ideas in the above passage. First, he makes a universal statement regarding the structure of political regimes, irrespective of whether they are principalities, republics or oligarchies: in every city there are two opposed humours. The unity of a political regime, according to his statement, is organic. Secondly, the term *umori* means here one of two things: it can mean the social classes themselves; in this case, the *grandi* of the *populo*; or it can mean the distinctive disposition or temperament or appetites of these classes. These

dispositions are identified as the desire to dominate and oppress on the part of one humour, and the desire is not to be dominated and oppressed on the part of the other. The opposition between these dispositions are natural, permanent, and necessary. As to who would constitute the *grandi* and *popolo* of a society at a given time would be a matter of history to indicate. But the point that Machiavelli makes here is theoretical: there would always be these divisions in political society.

The notion of opposition in question is a notion taken from the ancient medical science. We, in modernity, are not familiar with the nuances of this conception of opposition. We are predisposed to think of opposition in dialectical terms exclusively. But the notion of opposition underlying the theory of *umori* is quite different. According to that theory, one humour requires the active opposition of the other humour as a condition for its own healthy existence. If mutual opposition and mutual toleration did not exist, the organism could not exist as a healthy organism. It would become diseased or "corrupted," or moribund. Active mutual opposition, in other words, is a sign and a requirement of organic health.

Applied to body politic, what this means is that first, social classes are the basic constitutive units of political regimes as such; and secondly, that, for there to be a healthy political organism, there must be active opposition between classes. The constituting social classes ought not to seek the elimination of one another. If they did that, the organism itself perishes. Rather, each humour should seek the satisfaction of its appetites in the context of the health of the organism as a whole. There is no question of a class struggle in the modern Hegelian or Marxian senses of the term. Satisfaction, not recognition, is the key notion in Machiavelli's theory, whereas in Hegel and Marx, recognition is what everyone seeks after; and recognition can be achieved only if one class "overcomes" another; satisfaction, on the other hand, requires the co-existence of the "enemy" class as a condition for one's own active existence.

Thirdly, one of the implications of the theory of humours is that the body politic must somehow satisfy the humours of each class in a way consistent with the structure of the regime. And it must satisfy it with the force of an organic, naturalistic necessity. The imperative to satisfy humoral needs, then, is not strictly speaking a moral imperative; it is a premoral or an amoral naturalistic imperative. That is the implication of the concept of *umori*.⁶

Finally, the passage above speaks of three "effects" resulting from the opposition of political humours. The humoral conflicts, in other words, have a causal influence on the political regimes. Speaking universally, once again, Machiavelli asserts that such conflicts produce one of three effects: principality or republic or *licenzia* — a comprehensive classification of regimes from the point of view of *umori*. In *The Prince*, naturally, he develops how the conflict of political humours accounts for the structural differences of the various kinds of principalities analysed, as well as for the behavioural

problems that this creates for the new prince. The problem of the conflict of political humours in a good republic is analysed at great length in the *Discourses*. And as for how humoural conflicts characterize a *licenzia*, this is treated extensively in Machiavelli's third great work, the *History of Florence*. The theory of humours is also the theoretical presupposition of the *Discourse on the Remodeling of the Government of Florence*. Thus, there is a *prima facie* consistency in Machiavelli's understanding and use of the concept of *umori* in his major political works.

III. *Umori* and the Structure of the Principality

The first eleven chapters of *The Prince*, as everyone knows, deal with three structurally different types of principality – the hereditary, the mixed, and the new. A good deal of interpretative effort is spent on the *means* involved in acquiring and maintaining power in each of these types – customs, tradition, *virtu*, *fortuna*, wickedness, fortunate astuteness, etc. But such interpretative concerns should not obscure the fact that Machiavelli also requires from his readers a concern for the structural issues facing principalities. Preservation of the status quo is of course the concern of hereditary princes. Respect for customs and traditions, and being loved by “his own” (*sua*) – which presumably include the *grandi* and the *popolo* – would be sufficient here. The satisfaction that even a hereditary prince must provide is made easy by observance of customs and traditions respecting the status of the two social classes.

The concern of mixed and new principalities is of course innovation or renovation. Hence the prince should know who his “friends” and “enemies” are; which humour he should purge and which he should support. Both innovation and renovation mean a restructuring of the relationship of the classes towards the prince: he has to make the rich poor, and poor rich as David did (*Discourses* 1, 26). Understood in terms of *umori*, he has to decide which class to satisfy. And here lies the difficulty. For the innovator has for “enemies” all those who are satisfied with the status quo; he has as “lukewarm friends” all those who are in favour of change but not certain that changes would satisfy them (*The Prince* 6, 265). Machiavelli speaks of two “natural and normal difficulties” facing all actions of innovation and renovation. The first is that men are ready for innovation because of their “hope” of improving their material conditions, but they are deceived in this because they “see later by experience that they have done worse.” The second difficulty is that the innovator is often obliged to harm not only his “enemies,” the defenders of status quo, but also his “friends,” the promoters of change, because he cannot “satisfy them to the extent that they have presupposed that he would satisfy them,” because he is often obliged to use “strong medicine” against them (3, 254). In brief, each instance of innovation or renovation has to deal with its own *grandi* and its own *popolo*, and only a most excellent innovator would know which class he should side with and at the same time carry out

the innovation successfully. The theory of humours helps us to realize that class realignment is an essential part of innovation.

The key to understanding Machiavelli's analysis of mixed principalities, as is well known, is his comparative study of France and Turkey, particularly the relationship of the kings of these countries to their social classes. Turkey is an absolute monarchy; it has no hereditary *grandi*; their place is taken up by administrators of sanjaks, who are dependent entirely on the will of the Sultan. The most powerful political humour of Turkey is the army, not the administrators of sanjaks nor the people. Hence the Sultan is forced to satisfy the army rather than the people: "he must maintain their (the army's) friendship without regard to the people" (4 and 19).

In France, by contrast, the *grandi* have customary rights not derived from the king; in fact they are the rivals of the king for the throne. Moreover, there is strong antipathy between the *grandi* and the people: the people hate and fear the *grandi*, and the king beats down the latter, and favour the former, not directly but through the parliament (4).

It is because of these structural differences, asserts Machiavelli, that it is easy to conquer France but difficult to keep it, and difficult to defeat Turkey, but easy to keep it.

Structural factors also help us to understand why in setting up their respective mixed principalities Alexander succeeded and Louis XII failed. Alexander succeeded because he understood the structure of Darius' empire: it resembled, says Machiavelli, that of the Sultan. Once Alexander was able to defeat the Persian army, he was free to create his own *grandi* and to establish a healthy relationship with the people in the new territory. Louis XII, by contrast, did not, apparently understand the structural matters. He lost Milan as quickly as he gained it. To be sure, Louis XII committed six other errors, in military and foreign policies, brilliantly analysed in chapter 3. But his fundamental error was that he did not know whom to satisfy and how to, in Milan. He did not obtain the support of the Milanese. For, asserts Machiavelli, even the strongest armies count for nothing if the new prince cannot win over the support of the inhabitants: "Always, even though a new prince may have the strongest of armies, he always needs the support of the inhabitants when moving into a new province" (3, 258).

Turning now to the new principality, we see once again Machiavelli's acute awareness of the importance of structural issues. In the analysis of the new princes he mentions in the book—Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, Borgia, Agathocles, Hiero, Liverotto, Ferdinand of Aragon—there are always pointed references to the societies and classes they had to deal with. Thus Moses found the "people of Israel" in Egypt, enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians. This oppression and enslavement *disposed* them to follow Moses in order to get out of their servitude. Cyrus *needed* to find the Persians discontent with the Medes, and the Medes soft and effeminate through long peace. Theseus could not have demonstrated his virtue if he had not found the Athe-

nians dispersed (6). Borgia's greatest achievement was the pacification of Romagna. This was achieved by the destruction of the *signori* and *gentiliuomini* of that region, and by satisfying the people, who came to love and fear him (7). Agathocles had to kill "the senators and the richest of the people" of Sicily (8). Hiero had to eliminate "the old army" and to create a "new one," and replaced "old friends" with new ones: these were the "foundations" on which he could build "any building" (6). Liverotto of Fermo had to kill all "the leading men" (*primi uomini*) of Fermo (8). Ferdinand of Aragon innovated Spain by keeping the *grandi* of Castille "preoccupied" with wars so that they would not interfere with his innovation at home, and he could ultimately gain "reputation and control" over them. Besides, he satisfied the army with the money from the Church and the people. Finally, the expulsion of the Marranos, an unparalleled act of "pious cruelty," was popular with every class of Spaniards (21).⁷

All the foregoing examples of new princes stress violence as the means of restructuring society. What distinguishes the civic principality from the other principalities is the relative lack of violence in dealing with the *grandi* and the *populo*. But structurally, there is no major difference between any of these new principalities. In the civic principality what is needed is neither "virtue altogether" (*tutta virtu*) nor "fortune altogether" (*tutta fortuna*) but what he calls "fortune astuteness" (*astuzia fortunata*). Fortunate astuteness, it seems, is an ability to judge pragmatically which political humour is the more powerful in a given society at a given time. In the Italy of his day, Machiavelli believed, the *populo* had become more powerful than the *grandi*; therefore it would have been a matter of fortunate astuteness for a new prince of Italy to side with the *populo*. For these pragmatic and historical reasons, *The Prince* prefers the people over the *grandi*.

The importance of social classes does not escape Machiavelli's eyes even in his analysis of a relatively unique principality like the papal state. (It is acquired neither by *virtu* nor *fortuna*; their princes keep their power, however they act and live; it has states, but does not need defense; has subjects who are not alienated from their rulers, etc.) (11). Nevertheless when it comes to the analysis of its power, it is done in terms of the *grandi* of Rome, viz., the Orsini and the Colonna. The power of the church varied with the power of these *grandi*; it was only by putting them down that Alexander VI and Julius II were able to assert the church's temporal power.

The concern for the structural aspects of innovation is brought to its grand finale in chapter 24 where Machiavelli asks why Italian princes lost their state? The first reason is a "common failure of their armies," considered at length in chapters 12–14. The second reason, however, was their failure to deal adequately with their *grandi* and their *populo*: "we see that some of them either suffered hostility from the *populo* or, if the *populo* were friendly to them, did not know how to secure themselves against the *grandi*. Without these defects, princes do not lose their states if they are as strong enough to

keep an army in the field" (24, 294).

Which of these causes was the more fundamental one? Since a satisfied *populo* is the foundation of a good citizen army, it should be inferred that the ultimate reason for Italy's political corruption was failure of its princes to compose the political humours of their principalities. By inference, again, the task before the new prince of Italy would be to understand the nature of political humours and to take measures accordingly to restore the Italian body politic to its natural health.

IV. *Umori* and Ethics in *The Prince*

We now turn to a consideration of the ethical implications of the theory of political humours in *The Prince*. They can be summed up perhaps in one word: satisfaction. Innovation and renovation in *The Prince* are to be judged by their ability to provide for a lasting satisfaction to the dominant social class concerned. The ethical questions of liberality and stinginess, love and fear, cruelty and mercy, hatred and contempt are all approached from this perspective: would they contribute to the satisfaction of the dominant class, and thereby to the security of the prince and the state? Satisfying the humours of the dominant political class and the security of the power of the prince are inseparable, mutually dependent, phenomena.

Thus Machiavelli recommends stinginess in place of liberality because it will keep the people satisfied (16). For liberality requires, according to Machiavelli, avarice and lavishness with the subjects' money. It means higher taxes which the people never like. Liberality therefore will make the prince "hateful to his subjects." It will benefit only the few, while it will injure the many. Stinginess, on the other hand, even though a vice, is preferable to liberality because ultimately it will produce more satisfaction to the people.

The question of whether it is better to be loved or feared is answered in the same way (17). To be feared is politically a better situation than to be loved, because one is loved, according to Machiavelli, on one's lover's term, whereas one is feared on one's own term. And it is possible to combine being feared and being not hated so long as one is respectful of what people love most, namely property and honour.

Cruelty, too, is judged on the basis of its political utility, measured in terms of its capacity to satisfy the people. Cruelty "well used" is that which a prince does all at once and which "transmutes into the greatest possible benefit to his subjects" (8, 270).

Finally, hatred and contempt also are evaluated to terms of their political utility. The worst threat to a new prince is that he is hated by the "universale," and the greatest security of the prince, is "the benevolence of the people" (19, 285). The famous analysis in chapter 19 of the emperors of the Roman principate is used by Machiavelli to confirm the above points: that chapter as it were connects ethics to the theory of humours in a deliberate way.

As a matter of historical fact, the Roman principate had to deal with, three, not two, political humours: those of the *grandi*, the people, and the army (*soldati*). "This difficulty was so great that it caused the ruin of many emperors, since they could not satisfy both the soldiers and the people" (19, 286). Those who succeeded in satisfying the soldiers succeeded in securing their own power, even though this required oppressing the people. "This decision was necessary," he writes approvingly, "since princes cannot escape being hated by some one, they should seek first not to be hated by any large groups, and if they cannot attain this, they should make every effort to escape the hatred of the most powerful group" (*Ibid.*). This, then, is Machiavelli's final position in *The Prince* on the ethical aspect of the theory of humours: satisfy the most influential humour of the realm. It does not matter whether its demands are just or immoral or inhuman. So long as they have political support, the prince should satisfy them. More, the prince should go so far as to adapt himself to the humour of the dominant group. He must enter into their evil ways: "Therefore, as I said above, if a prince wishes to keep his state, he is often forced to be not good, because when that group (*universale*)—whether the *popolo* or the army or the *grandi*—which you decide you need to maintain yourself, is corrupt, you have to adapt yourself to its humour (*umore*) in order to satisfy it" (19, 287).

Here we find the clearest evidence of the connection that exists between the theory of humours and Machiavellian ethics. The prince must follow the humour of the dominant class, even if that class is the epitome of corruption, cruelty, oppression, as were the *soldati* in the Roman principate. We see here that the notion of *umori* is also linked to the idea of "acquiring the power to be not good." Machiavelli had introduced this notorious idea in chapter 15: "it is necessary for a prince, if he wants to maintain himself, to learn to be not good, and to use this knowledge and not use it according to necessity." It is reintroduced in chapter 19, in the context of the theory of humours. "Learning to be not good" means, according to chapter 19, adapting oneself to the humours of the corrupt dominant class. Finally, the notion of *umori* also throws some light on what Machiavelli means by necessity. Satisfying a humour, in ancient medical science, is a matter of natural necessity, not moral choice. A humour implies organic necessity. Applied to body politic, the implication is that the satisfaction of political humours too should follow the law of organic necessity.

It is instructive in this regard to study closely the major example that Machiavelli uses in chapter 19 to illustrate how the Roman emperors satisfied the humours of the army. The example in question is Septimus Severus, a "very savage lion," and a "very tricky fox." His actions, notes Machiavelli, displayed the *persona* of the lion and the fox, i.e., his behaviour approximated, as far as human behaviour could approximate, animalistic ferocity and cunning. Action dictated by temperament, but not governed by rational restraint, is what we see in Machiavelli's description of Severus. And

he portrays his actions as the actions of "a great man." His *virtues*, writes Machiavelli, "made him so admirable in the sight of the army and the people that the latter remained astonished and stupefied, while the former were reverent and satisfied" (*Ibid.*). Here we find, then, at least one description of Machiavellian *virtues*: virtues are activities that flow from an actor who has adapted his behaviour to the *umore* of a corrupt social class. There is, therefore, a link between Machiavellian *virtu* and the notion of *umore*.

It appears, then, that according to Machiavelli, the body politic has no higher end to attend to than the satisfaction of the pre-moral, appetitive, needs of social classes. In traditional political theory, it may be noted, princes and statesmen were obliged not only to provide for society's pre-moral needs, but also to do so within the bounds of *phronesis*, the rule of reason, i.e. reason understood in the Platonic/Aristotelian sense. The body politic was never viewed in exclusively humoural terms: whatever pre-moral ends it served, it had nevertheless to prepare men for a life of virtue. But Machiavelli, through the theory of humours, introduces the idea that the real ends of politics are basically pre-moral and pre-rational. Humours demand a naturalistic ethic.⁸

In conclusion, it is beyond dispute that the theory of political humours underlying *The Prince* enables one to understand the point that satisfying the appetites of the dominant class is inseparable from the problem of innovation. It also highlights the naturalistic character of the ethics that goes with it. Finally, it gives us one way of distinguishing between *The Princes* and the *Discourses*: in the former, a case for satisfying the dominant political humour through the agency of the prince is made; in the latter the argument rather is that the political humours of both classes should be satisfied through the instrumentality of *ordini*. To this extent the theory of political humours present in *The Prince* is not exactly the same as that found in the *Discourses*.

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NOTES

- 1 Chiappelli 78 makes a brief mention of *umori*. No extensive treatment of *umori* is attempted by Chiappelli. He seems to locate the meaning of *umori* in the *will* of a group. The notion of will applied to *umori* is perhaps misleading, since *umori* refers to something pre-rational, and therefore not voluntary. If by will is understood a faculty capable of free choice, then the notion of *umori* cannot conveniently be attached to it.
- 2 The theory of humours goes back to Hippocratic sources. See *Hippocrates*. Galen was its great exponent. Interest in ancient medical literature was one of the major features of the Renaissance in Italy.
- 3 *Discourses*, 1. Preface. References to the texts of Machiavelli are to Machiavelli, *Tutte le opere*. For the English version of the text of *The Prince*, I have normally followed Mansfield's translation.
- 4 Tommasini 2, 38–40, has noted that Machiavelli's chancery colleagues such as Marcello Virgilio were well acquainted with the alliance between medicine and philosophy. He rightly assumes that Machiavelli was well acquainted with the medical theories prevalent in Florence.

- The so-called 'dispute' between medicine and law had a long standing history in humanistic circles. See Salutati, Lockwood, Thorndike, *Science and Thought*, especially ch. 2, which deals with "Medicine vs Law at Florence"; also in his "De Complexionibus," Thorndike gives an account of the unpublished manuscripts of the Renaissance period available in the libraries of Oxford, Florence, the Vatican, on the subject of the four humours.
- 5 It is quite legitimate I believe to speak of a *theory* of humours in Machiavelli. Already Sasso has spoken of a *dottrina degli umori* in Machiavelli, and of its being *fondamentale nelle pagine di Machiavelli* 232–233.
 - 6 It is important to realize that the medical theory of *umori* was a theory of a natural science of the period. The four humours were thought to be causally connected to the operations of the four elements. "Our four bodily humours and their combinations," wrote Marsilio Ficino, in one of his letters, "also undergo this rapid (natural) change. Hence the peak of bodily health is considered, as it was by Hippocrates, to be very deceptive. In Nature, of course, descent quite uninterruptedly follows ascent. What was swiftly flowered, quickly withers" (2, 7). Marsilio was a major figure writing in the field of Renaissance medicine, and a teacher of, among others, Marcello Virgilio, Machiavelli's colleague in the chancery. Machiavelli has transferred to his political theory something of the naturalism proper to the medical theory.
 - 7 It is instructive to note that historians even as late as the middle of the last century should use the concepts of health and humours, in writing about the expulsion of the Marranos from Spain: "we must take into view the actual position of the Jews at that time. Far from forming an integral part of the commonwealth, they were regarded as alien to it, as a mere excrescence, which, so far from contributing to the *healthful action of the body politic*, was nourished by its *vicious humours*, and might be lopped off at any time when *the health of system demanded it*" (Prescott 2, 148). Italics not in the original.
 - 8 Chabod's authority also may be invoked in support of Machiavelli naturalistic ethic. Machiavelli, says Chabod 213, was influenced by *naturalismo del Rinascimento*. The state for Machiavelli is a natural organism that has its birth, growth, illnesses, decline and death like any other natural organism.

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L'Orazia di P. Aretino: riflessioni sulla scelta del testo-base

Michael Lettieri

La prima edizione dell'*Orazia* fu pubblicata da Pietro Aretino nel 1546 a Venezia con i torchi di Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari. Dopo questa prima stampa del 1546 il Giolito ristampò l'*Orazia* nel 1549. Questa seconda edizione è in apparenza una pura replica dell'originale del 1546 con la stessa lettera dedicatoria a Paolo III. Considerato comunque che l'Aretino in quel periodo si trovava a Venezia e la stampa si faceva molto probabilmente con la sua approvazione, è possibile che vi effettuasse qualche correzione o cambiamento. La probabilità che l'Aretino sia intervenuto nella stampa del 1549 viene rafforzata dalla lettera datata Venezia maggio 1548, dove l'autore scrive a Trifone Gabriele di aver ricomposto l'*Orazia* e di averne corretto (dietro il suggerimento dello stesso Trifone) "alcune sue durezza": "sì mi hanno colmo di piacere le laudi che la lingua magnifica del vostro giuditio egregio ha dato all'*Horatia*, tragedia da me ricomposta, poi ch'io l'hebbi fornita di comporla, sì credetti al cenno che mi faceste d'alcune sue durezza [. . .]" (c. 248). dunque probabile che la seconda stampa racchiuda i mutamenti che Trifone Gabriele aveva proposto all'autore e che egli aveva accettato. Quest'ipotesi diventa certezza nel commento di A.G.C. Galletti, il quale, senza aver sottoposto rigorosamente ad esame integrale e comparativo le due cinquecentine, decide di riprodurre l'edizione del 1549 perché in confronto all'edizione del 1546 risulta "migliorata d'assai, siccome dalla lettera dell'Aretino a Trifone Gabriele ci vien confermato" (4).¹ Sulla scia del Galletti qualche anno più tardi anche Salvatore Bongi osserva che tutte e due le giolotine possono "dirsi egualmente originali perché fatte ambedue sotto l'occhio dell'autore" (134). In ogni modo, lo stesso Bongi poi giustamente osserva che l'intervento dell'Aretino nella seconda edizione resta "a verificarsi col raffronto delle due stampe" (133).

Tuttavia sia per il confronto delle due stampe sia per la ripubblicazione dell'opera stessa si dovette aspettare oltre tre secoli.² Infatti la messa all'Indice di tutte le opere dell'Aretino nel 1558 non risparmiò nemmeno l'*Orazia*, che non fu più ristampata dopo il 1549. L'opera divenne così rara che già nello stesso sedicesimo secolo era difficile averne una copia tant'è vero che l'editore delle commedie aretiniane del 1588 non vi poté includere la tragedia, da lui erroneamente citata con il titolo di *Hortensia*,³ perché non ne riuscì a trovare una copia. Il Bongi, inoltre, ci fa notare che ben 39 esemplari dell'*Orazia* furono distrutti solamente nella succursale che Gabriel Giolito gestiva a Napoli (LXXXV).⁴

La prima pubblicazione moderna dell'*Orazia* ci arriva con l'edizione del Galletti⁵ mentre il primo a collazionare le due cinquecentine è Ferdinando Neri, il quale assicura che dalla prima alla seconda edizione non c'è stato alcun rifacimento (79). Dopo di lui, oltre sessant'anni più tardi, anche Giorgio Petrocchi esegue il confronto sistematico delle due attestazioni a stampa e conclude che: 1. l'edizione del 1546 è in netto predominio rispetto a quella del 1549, la quale sovente falsa e corrompe il testo; 2. l'Aretino non è intervenuto nella stampa successiva alla prima, nemmeno in forma di saltuario consiglio; 3. l'edizione del 1546 è, dunque, la sola base possibile per il restauro del testo (829–31). Il testo del Petrocchi, quindi, viene esemplato sostanzialmente sulla prima giolitina.

Da una nostra *collatio* delle due cinquecentine è risultato comunque che la seconda stampa non è una fedele riproduzione della prima, e che forse sia il Neri che il Petrocchi escludono troppo facilmente un intervento dell'Aretino nell'edizione del 1549. Infatti, anche se da una parte la seconda giolitina risulta sfigurata da omissioni, interpolazioni, distrazioni involontarie e sciatterie d'ogni specie — cfr. ad esempio i seguenti casi (la seconda *lectio* è quella espressa dalla 1549): Prologo, 123 (se dove stassi il Clima freddo, e il caldo / se dove stassi in Clima freddo, e il caldo); I, 78 (Horatij / Horarij), 200 (in gratia / ingrata), 217 (in torre / intorto), 415 (la dieta / la deita), 521 (Cosi Celia si parla / Così Celui si parla); II, 35 (Vesta / Vasta), 112 (esercitio / esercito), 256 (come a te io / che a te io), 301 (fama / suma), 374 (con che / non che), 377 (del fin / del duol); III, 170 (porpora / porporea), 188 (parlando / portando), 289 (sembianza / seambianza), 490 (nostro / vostro), 499 (non ci è / ci è), 514 (aura / ura); IV, 32 (cui parole / dui parole), 233 (a la legge / a le legge), 323 (chi ti fa / che ti fa), 438 (non / noi); V, 308 (col porre / col padre), 332 (quel che ho concluso / quel che ha concluso), 342 (il fallo / il falso), 364 (quel / qual), 384 (teco fo / te ne fo), 416 (so / fo), 485 (stesso / spesso), 515 (si lochino / si lechino); ecc. —, dall'altra non solo corregge più di un errore dell'edizione principe — cfr. ad esempio (la seconda *lectio* appartiene alla 1549) Prologo 114 (ampie, et immense / ampio, et immenso); I, 59 (quel patritia Nume / quel patritio Nume), 399 (fonte / fronte);⁶ II, 206 (un solo / un sol); IV, 299 (opprobri / opprobri), 521 (scortato / scordato); V, 146 (sano / sono), 310 (fatte / fatto), 453 (Misericordia / Misericordia) — ma apporta ad essa alcune modificazioni — cfr. ad esempio (la prima *lectio* è quella espressa dalla 1546) I, 77 (si mi par / se mi par), 187 (li conditioni / le conditioni), 262 (chieggo / chieggio), 283 (a cio / accio), 546 (taciam / tacciam), 549 (atendiam / attendiam); II, 139 (trionfo / trionfo), 186 (circostanti / circonstanti), 247 (nimico / nemico), 264 (grido / crido), 286 (hinni / himni), 288 (sacritij / sacrificij), 349 (trionfale / trionfale); III, 48 (stormenti / stromenti), 87 (dunque / adunque), 108 (de lo agli inferi / de l'agi'inferi), 219 (traforate / trasforate), 383 (ognun / ogniun), 414 (incostante / inconstante), 415 (senza alcun / senz'alcun), 419 (inanzi / innanzi), 437 (amiro / ammiro), 486 (abandoni / abbandoni); IV, 36 (apelli / appelli), 57

(giuditio / giudizio), 177 (deligentia / diligentia), 190 (Segue / Segui), 216 (audatia / audacia), 269 (esercitarse / esercitarsi), 282 (fusse / fosse), 283 (autorità / auttorità), 330 (ubbidisce / ubbidisci), 420 (artifitioso / artisicioso),⁷ 422 (aciocche / accio che), 432 (provede / provedi), 435 (alpestre / alpestra), 445 (bruttezza / brutezza), 457 (faciate / facciate), 462 (giuditij / giudicij); V, 17 (mancavon / mancavan), 82 (devea / deveva), 117 (letigio / litigio), 120 (horibil / horribil), 120 (suplitio / supplitio), 156 (Hedifitij / Hedificij), 163 (rimaneva / rimanea), 221 (uffitio / ufficio), 234 (vol / vuol), 273 (sacriftij / sacrificij), 274 (atribuiti / attribuiti), 304 (giuditio / giudizio), 340 (aconcia / acconcia), 384 (vol / vuol), 416 (vol / vuol), 450 (aciò / acciò), 492 (ognuna / ogniuna); ecc. —.

Alla luce di questi risultati ci chiediamo se si possa e si debba escludere, e con quali argomenti, un intervento dell'Aretino nel passaggio da un'edizione all'altra. Ci sembra chiaro che, quanto alla base testuale dell'edizione critica, tra le due cinquecentine si pone un problema di scelta. Veniamo quindi a domandarci a quale delle due stampe si deve dare la preferenza: alla 1546 la quale, secondo il Petrocchi, "è in netto predominio rispetto alla seconda edizione, che sovente falsa e corrompe il testo" (830) e offre i vantaggi di presentare meno errori di stampa, oppure alla 1549 (come fanno gli editori dell'*Orazia* dalla sua prima edizione moderna del 1855 fino all'edizione Ferrero del 1970) la quale non solo corregge qualche errore della 1546 ma possiede alcuni ritocchi che potrebbero rappresentare gli effettivi desideri dell'autore ed avere quindi un certo valore?

Da una parte si potrebbe senz'altro assecondare il ragionamento di Petrocchi e concludere che, siccome nella 1549 gli errori sono numerosi e le correzioni poche (830-31),⁸ l'Aretino non ritoccò affatto la stampa seriore. Per appoggiare il parere del Petrocchi, potremmo chiederci: se l'Aretino è realmente intervenuto a correggere la seconda stampa, anche in forma soltanto di saltuario consiglio, come mai ha corretto solo alcuni degli errori presenti nella 1546? Quanto ai ritocchi potremmo dire che si tratta solo di sporadici e lievissimi cambiamenti formali e quindi privi di importanza.⁹

Sebbene anche noi proponiamo la 1546 come testo-base per la ricostruzione del testo, i motivi che ci inducono a tale scelta sono diversi da quelli appena enunciati, in quanto questi ultimi possono essere confutati.

Infatti, in primo luogo, non è completamente esatto dire che l'Aretino è intervenuto solo nella 1546 in quanto questa è superiore alla seconda, la quale spesso "falsa e corrompe il testo." Se è vero che nella seconda cinquecentina le omissioni e le aberrazioni di vario genere non mancano, è altrettanto vero che molti degli errori sono minime particolarità, semplici refusi, dovuti alla poca cura con cui risulta preparata l'edizione¹⁰ e correggibili senza molta difficoltà. Si tratta, insomma, per lo più, di mende involontarie, di errori fortuiti i quali, in effetti, spesso sfuggono perfino alla attenta e ripetuta revisione alla quale si procede di solito prima di congedare le bozze. E più numerosi, logicamente, essi appaiono nelle epoche come appunto quella dell'Aretino,

in cui la tecnica tipografica era ancora lontana dal moderno perfezionamento.

Inoltre, in risposta al nostro interrogativo, sul perché l'intervento correttivo nella 1549 non sia completo ma consista soltanto in qualche sporadica correzione o cambiamento linguistico, possiamo affermare che, sia pure per motivi diversi, anche l'autore che si faccia correttore di se stesso può incapere in omissioni e lapsus non dissimili da quelli di un qualsiasi amanuense; e nemmeno è detto che, rileggendo, egli possa notarli immancabilmente e quindi eliminarli. Anzi, chiunque "abbia una certa dimestichezza con la correzione di bozze sa [. . .] che essa è tanto più difficile proprio quando si tratta di pagine redatte dal revisore stesso, l'insidia essendo rappresentata dal fatto che, conoscendo perfettamente il testo può accadere più facilmente di 'leggere' ciò che si pensa e si ricorda d'aver scritto, anziché quello che nella copia risulta materialmente scritto" (Balduino 39).

Per quanto riguarda i ritocchi linguistici, c'è da notare che potrebbe trattarsi di cambiamenti voluti e consapevoli e non di semplici e leggere mutazioni formali. Infatti, molti dei mutamenti del trapasso dalla redazione primitiva dell'*Orazia* a quella più tarda (nonostante la revisione non sia né completa né sempre costante) potrebbero rivelare una tendenziale adesione alla prassi desumibile dalle *Prose* di Pietro Bembo e a voci latine, in corrispondenza con il linguaggio della tragedia aretiniana, linguaggio più che altro arcaizante e pieno di latinismi.¹¹ Le più notevoli delle variazioni che potrebbero concernere la norma inaugurata da Bembo consistono nella sostituzione di "accio" (cfr. I,283; V,450) "attendiam" (I,549) "abbandoni" (III,486) "accincia" (V,340) — tutte con segni geminati come le vuole Bembo *Prose* III, 10¹² — a "a cio" "atendiam" "abandoni" "aconcia" (con segni scempi); di "tacciam" (I,546) "facciate" (IV,457) (*Prose* III,46) a "taciam" "faciate"; di "vuol" (V,234,384,416) (sempre secondo i desideri di Bembo *Prose* III,28) a "vol"; della desinenza in -i a quella in -e nella seconda singolare degli imperativi (ad es. "segue" (IV,190) è cambiato per "segui," "ubbidisce" (IV,330) per "ubbidisci," "provede" (IV,432) per "provedi," per adesione a Bembo *Prose* III,39); della terminazione in -avano a quella in -avono nella terza plurale dell'imperfetto (ad es. "mancavon" (V,17) è sostituito da "mancavan," cfr. Bembo *Prose* III,30); di "le" (I,187) a "li" (cfr. Bembo *Prose* III,9); di "chieggio" (I,262) a "chieggo" (secondo Bembo *Prose* III,46 "Deggio" 'Veggio' e dell'altre eziandio si son dette ne' versi"). Per quanto concerne le lezioni della 1549 più vicine al latino, cfr. ad esempio i seguenti casi:

	1546	1549
I, 549	atendiam	attendiam (lat. "attendere")
II,186	circostanti	circonstanti (lat. "circumstante(m)")
II,264	grido	crido (lat. parl. "critare")
II,286	hinni	himni (lat. "hymnu(m)")
II,288;V,273	sacrititij	sacrificij (lat. "sacrificiu(m)")
III,48	stormenti	stromenti (lat. "instrumentu(m)")

III,219	traforate	trasforate (lat. tardo "transforare")
III,414	incostante	inconstante (lat. "inconstante(m)")
III,437	amiro	ammiro (lat. "admirari")
IV,36	apelli	appelli (lat. "appellare")
IV,57;V,304	giuditio	giudicio (lat. "iudiciu(m)")
IV,462	giuditij	giudicij
IV,177	deligentia	diligentia (lat. "diligentia(m)")
IV,216	audatia	audacia (lat. "audacia(m)")
IV,283	autorità	auctorità (lat. "auctoritate(m)")
IV, 420	artifitioso	artisicioso (lat. "artificiosus")
IV,445	bruttezza	brutezza (lat. "brutu(m)")
V,117	letigio	litigio (lat. "litigiu(m)")
V,120	suplitio	supplitio (lat. "suppliciu(m)")
V,120	horibil	horribil (lat. "horribile(m)")
V,156	hedifitij	hedificij (lat. "aedificiu(m)")
V,221	uffitio	ufficio (lat. "officiu(m)")
V,274	atribuiti	attribuiti (lat. "attribuere") ¹³

Un altro motivo a favore della 1546 sarebbe il fatto che l'Aretino non soleva correggere le sue opere;¹⁴ e pertanto sarebbe da escludere un suo intervento nella 1549. Comunque, anche in questo caso ci troviamo di fronte a delle ragioni facilmente oppugnabili e poco scientifiche, in quanto basta la lettera, già citata, dell'Aretino a Trifone Gabriele per dimostrare l'infondatezza e l'aspetto contraddittorio di una simile argomentazione. La lettera a Trifone, anche se da una parte non è dimostrazione di un sicuro intervento dell'Aretino nella 1549, dall'altra potrebbe senz'altro indicare una certa intenzione da parte dell'autore di ritoccare le sue opere.

Inoltre, le "durezze" che Trifone aveva rimproverato all'Aretino potrebbero benissimo appartenere al tipo di ritocchi linguistici presenti nella seconda giolitina, alcuni dei quali, come si è avuto modo di notare, collimano con le opinioni del Bembo. E, a questo proposito, non si dimentichi che in fatto di lingua il Bembo e il Trifone si trovavano attestati sulle medesime posizioni, tanto che il Bembo, prima della pubblicazione delle *Prose*, si rivolse al Trifone per riceverne consigli (Migliorini 340). Allo stesso tempo, tutto ciò non vuol necessariamente dire che questi mutamenti linguistici debbano per forza appartenere all'autore e che le "durezze" debbano riferirsi necessariamente ai cambiamenti linguistici che abbiamo trovato nella 1549. Infatti, le "durezze" potrebbero anche riguardare rilievi, per esempio, di carattere stilistico¹⁵ o di altro tipo, che l'Aretino avrebbe dovuto compiere e che poi, per motivi a noi sconosciuti, non avrebbe fatto pervenire all'editore.

Ovviamente, dal discorso appena fatto, risulta manifesto che l'accertamento critico del testo offre difficoltà notevoli; ed è anzi dubbio che si possa arrivare a risultati certi, vista la scarsa scrupolosità degli stampatori del '500 nel rispettare la volontà degli autori.¹⁶ Riesce molto arduo, quindi, distinguere

gli interventi dell'autore da quelli dovuti ad altri, con o senza il consenso di lui. Si possono solo proporre diverse soluzioni del problema critico-editoriale. Per quanto concerne il nostro caso—dove la tradizione si bipartisce in due rami, ognuno dei quali risulta portatore di una lezione equipollente—è consigliabile soprattutto orientare la scelta verso un unico testimone (e non optare, ad esempio, in modo casuale, una volta per la lezione della 1546 e un'altra per quella della 1549), in quanto in tal modo—anche se questo comportamento possiede i suoi rischi (infatti potrebbe anche essere procedimento incauto applicare una soluzione e non l'altra, e viceversa)—si avrebbe almeno il pregio della coerenza e si impedirebbe così la contaminazione di tradizioni diverse e quindi la consegna al lettore di un testo che storicamente non è mai esistito. Tra le due edizioni ci sembra più opportuno adottare come testo-base la 1546 perchè questo testimone offre almeno i vantaggi di non aver subito i ritocchi dell'Aretino o di chi altro abbia curato la seconda giolitina. Accordando la preferenza alla 1549 rischieremmo pertanto di ricostruire un testo che forse non è mai esistito nella volontà dell'autore.

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NOTE

- 1 È stato più che altro sul fondamento di quest'ipotesi, crediamo, che per anni—e precisamente fino all'edizione di Giorgio Petrocchi il quale, come vedremo più avanti, dopo aver messo a confronto le due giolitine decide di scegliere come testo-base della sua edizione critica l'edizione del 1546—si è sempre continuato a stampare la redazione più tarda dell'*Orazia*. Anche G. G. Ferrero, senza aver collazionato le due giolitine, sembra essere sicuro di un intervento di correzione da parte dell'Aretino nella stampa del 1549. "Ho riprodotto," scrive il Ferrero, "il testo del 1549, che reca qualche variante, probabilmente dovuta all'autore, in confronto alla prima edizione, che è del 1546" (38). Si noti che, prima dell'edizione Petrocchi, c'è chi dice di riprodurre il testo del 1546 ma poi in effetti riproduce il testo della seconda giolitina. Si veda ad esempio l'edizione del 1914 la quale non riproduce il testo dell'antica stampa del 1546—come afferma il Maccarrone (I)—bensì quello di Sonzogno, edizione, questa, che ha come capostipite la 1549. Anche Giovanni Orsini nella sua edizione afferma di pubblicare dell'*Orazia* "il testo originale, secondo la stampa veneziana del 1546" (7). Tuttavia, dal confronto e riscontro da noi compiuto tra questa e gli altri testimoni risulta che l'edizione dell'Orsini dipende soprattutto dalle edizioni ottocentesche dell'*Orazia*, le quali sono tutte esemplate sulla 1549.
- 2 Se si eccettua che fu stampata e rappresentata a Venezia nel 1604 con puro travestimento controriformistico, sotto il titolo di *Amore della patria* (Venezia: Barezzi, 1604) di Giuliano Gosellini. Cfr. ciò che ne dicono A. L. Stiefel (476), Carlo Bertani (311) e Francesca Bonanni.
- 3 P. Aretino, *Quattro comedie del divino Pietro Aretino, cioè "Il Marescalco," "La Talanta," "La Cortegiana," "L'Hipocrito"*, novellamente ritornate, per mezzo della stampa, a luce, a richiesta de' conoscitori del lor valore. Londra: John Wolf, 1588. Della rarità dell'opera parla pure Philartète Chasles: "[...] personnes ne parle de cette tragédie, qui s'imprime incognito et n'est point représentée; elle se perd, les bibliothèques de France et de la Grande-Bretagne ne la possèdent même pas; et si vous avez envie de comparer aux Horaces du grand Corneille l'*Orazia* de l'Arétin, vous êtes forcé d'aller en Italie, de consulter les savants de Rome et

- de Venise, et de fouiller les derniers recoins mystérieux de quelques tablettes poudreuses qui recèlent sous quadruple clé cette rareté littéraire" (491). E più avanti dirà ancora: "sa tragédie l'*Orazia* est un livre des plus rares" (492). Anche S. Bongi nota che l'*Orazia* forse proprio per la sua rarità non fu "inserita neppure nel *Teatro Antico* del Poggiali di Livorno e de' *Classici* di Milano" (134).
- 4 A riguardo della persecuzione dell'opera aretiniana (configuratasi in una vera e propria distruzione materiale dei testi) in tempi controriformistici cfr. anche *Innamorati* 1036.
 - 5 L'edizione del Galletti è seguita dalle seguenti edizioni:
 - 1863 *La Orazia*, tragedia di M. P. Aretino, tratta da quella rarissima di Vinegia appresso Gabriel Giolito MDXLIX, in *Opere* di P. Aretino, ordinate ed annotate per Massimo Fabi, precedute da un discorso intorno alla vita dell'autore ed al suo secolo. Milano: F. San Vito, 1863 (Milano: Brigola, 1881 2ed.).
 - 1875 Camerini; 1876 2ed.; 1888 3ed.; [19..] (edizione senza data) 4ed.; 1930 5ed.; 1962 6ed.
 - 1890 Stiavelli.
 - 1911 *La Orazia*, tragedia in cinque atti, con prefazione di A. Castaldo. Roma: Garroni, 1911.
 - 1914 Maccarrone
 - 1950 Orsini.
 - 1960 *La Orazia*, in *Il teatro tragico italiano* [. . .], a cura di F. Doglio. Parma: Guanda, 1960.
 - 1963 *Orazia*, in *La tragedia classica dalle origini al Maffei*, a cura di G. Gasparini. Torino: Tipografia Torinese, 1963.
 - 1970 Ferrero.
 - 1971 Aretino. *Teatro*. A cura di Giorgio Petrocchi.
 - 1974 *La Orazia*, in *Tutto il teatro*, a cura di A. Pinchera. Roma: Newton Compton, 1974.
 - 1977 *Orazia*, in *Il teatro italiano*, vol. II, *La tragedia del Cinquecento*, t. 1, a cura di M. Ariani. Torino: Einaudi, 1977.
 - 1988 *L'Orazia*, in *Teatro del cinquecento*, t. I, *La tragedia*, a cura di R. Cremante. Milano-Napoli: Ricciardi, 1988.
 - 6 Si noti che qui l'intervento correttorio è da parte della 1549 e non (come invece crede Petrocchi 830) da parte della 1546.
 - 7 Si noti che qui la 1549 abbandona la "ti" etimologica, ma allo stesso tempo commette errore dovuto senz'altro a confusione tra "f" e "s."
 - 8 Le sviste della 1546 corrette dalla 1549 che cita il Petrocchi sono le seguenti: Prologo 114 ("ampie et immense"); I,59 ("patritia"); II,206 ("un solo"); V,453 ("Misericordia"). Il Petrocchi non fa riferimento a nessun ritocco linguistico.
 - 9 Il Neri, infatti, che dice di aver collazionato le due giolitine, scrive che si tratta semplicemente di "lievissime mutazioni formali" (79).
 - 10 Da segnalare che altre volte (a causa di innumerevoli errori di stampa) l'Aretino è stato vittima del Giolito. Si pensi ad esempio al terzo libro delle sue lettere stampato dal Giolito anche nel 1546. In quell'occasione infatti l'Aretino rimase insoddisfatto dell'edizione, per averla trovata piena di errori. Ne è testimone una lettera indirizzata a Niccolò Martelli (la lettera è nel secondo volume delle lettere del Martelli a lungo rimasto inedito in un codice della Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze ma poi pubblicato nel 1916) al quale il Nostro scrive: ". . . per tornare agli stampatori, il terzo delle lettere mie mi fa vergognar d'averle fatte però ch'una parola non appicca con l'altra et pur ebbe venti ducati colui che me le copiò. Certo io ho tanta vergogna d'averle fatte, quanta fatica ho sofferto in comporle; et, come dice la vostra Magnificenzia, ai Barbari, ai Tramontani accurati, corretti et diligenti bisogna darle et non ai Italiani meccanici, porci, che voglion che la loro ignoranza in ciò, dottrina sia [. . .]" (78).

- 11 Già Marco Ariani ha osservato che nell'*Orazia* l'Aretino mette in opera un linguaggio tragico "di esasperata . . . marcatura retorico-classicistica, puntellato da una sintassi testardamente ipotattica e da una abnorme invadenza di latinismi culti" (XLIV).
- 12 Si noti che, come osserva il Dionisotti, "è segno di voluto arcaismo l'uso che di tali raddoppiamenti sintattici fa il Bembo" (200).
- 13 Oltre agli esempi già citati, potrebbero essere correzioni volute della seconda giolitina anche le seguenti (la prima *lectio* appartiene all'edizione del 1546): II, 139 ("trionfo" / "trionfo"), 349 ("trionfale" / "trionfale"); III, 87 ("dunque" / "adunque"); IV, 435 ("alpestre" / "alpestra").
- 14 A questo proposito, B. Corrigan, commentando le opere teatrali dell'Aretino curate dal Petrocchi, scrive: "Giorgio Petrocchi has been fortunate in his edition of Aretino's plays. For many of them the original manuscript still exists, and Aretino generally supervised his first editions but did not trouble to revise, so that it can be assumed that later readings are not by his hand" (62).
- 15 Le "durezze" delle quali parla l'autore potrebbero infatti anche riferirsi allo stile della tragedia, a volte aspro, impacciato ed insicuro. F. Flora parla ad esempio della "povertà" di un "verso duro e teso, che par sempre dubitare dell'esatta misura" e di "metafore sgradevoli" che "si congiungono alla sgradevole prosaicità fonica e alla vera e propria inesperienza del verso." Il Maccarrone a proposito dell'*Orazia* parla di un Aretino "impastoiato," "gonfio" e "falso" nello stile e nel fraseggiare (XIV).
- 16 Se nella 1549 ci sono in effetti dei ritocchi o delle correzioni non sono dovuti necessariamente all'autore ma forse a quei letterati (stipendiati dallo stesso Giolito, quali appunto Ludovico Dolce, Francesco Sansovino, Ludovico Domenichi ecc.; per un elenco più vasto dei collaboratori al servizio del Giolito cfr. Bongi XXVII) che come professione preparavano per le stampe numerosi volumi, più o meno ritoccandoli secondo il loro gusto e secondo le loro opinioni grammaticali.

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Vico and Modern Thought: A Pedagogical Proposal

Domenico Pietropaolo

Today more than ever it is incumbent upon us to show the contemporary relevance of what we teach. We live in an age of *hic et nunc*, an age in which the centrality of the present has crossed the boundaries of metaphysical speculation to become the basis of everyone's self-understanding. In the vast majority of cases, programme formation and selection in our universities is determined solely by the practical demands of future careers, while course material is appreciated only in proportion to its potential contribution to a chosen area of concentration, understood as the essential core of one's education. And at a more advanced level, professional scholars read widely in fields adjacent to theirs, gleaning concepts, methods, and models that they can bring to bear on the object of their direct research in order to enrich their understanding of it. Students want to know how relevant a given course is to their professional orientation and how useful it can be to them as researchers in their discipline of specialization. Why, indeed, teach Vico today in North America? Of what relevance is his thought to North American students of the 1990's? What can they learn from Vico that can better enable them to face their professional tasks as humanists of the modern world? How can Vico speak to them and be heard across the distance of space and history?

In spite of the unprecedented and still increasing domestication of Vico studies in North America inaugurated by the tradition-setting *International Symposium* of 1969 (Tagliacozzo and White), which celebrated the beginning of the fourth century of Vico's life in history, brief selections from his works are no more than a small component of North-American anthological courses in liberal arts and in Italian literature, while, to my knowledge, monographic graduate courses on his thought—such as the one that I have been regularly offering since 1983 at the University of Toronto—are still very rare.¹ However, there can be no doubt that, whereas he has not yet succeeded in obtaining the space that he merits in our classrooms—which are naturally and understandably reluctant to grant institutional sanction to challenging innovations—Vico is nevertheless conquering America in the scholarly literature. Benedetto Croce would be surely surprised to find out that, only a few decades after he accused foreign scholars of ignorance for failing to see the importance of Vico in western philosophical history, allusion to Vico's thought is a frequent occurrence in North America, and that some of his most basic teachings would be echoed again and again in the disciplines of

the future (8, 293–94). And the momentum—thanks to the continued efforts the Institute for Vico Studies—is very rapidly increasing. A remarkable number of philologically responsible researchers in the humanities obviously feel the need to come to terms with Vico, in whom they frequently find ideal fatherhood, philosophical allegiance, and stimulation for further growth.²

It is in this literature—and not in the history of philosophy or in traditional Vico scholarship—that most graduate students first encounter the name of Vico, and it is with the expectations raised by such reading that they come to his works. Those students are as heterogeneous a group as their colleagues in other programmes, but they share this feature: they all expect Vico to speak to their major concerns and to provide them with a source of ideas and methods applicable to other areas.

The course that I propose, which is based on the one that I actually offer at the University of Toronto, is an attempt to teach Vico's thought and to meet in part such expectations by using the students' academic background in the interpretation of his works. It is intended to be a systematic effort to let Vico speak to the students through selected aspects of contemporary culture. Its purpose is to explain Vico's philosophy and at once to show its relevance to the modern world without divorcing it from its original historical context. This should not be misconstrued as a way of artificially assimilating Vico to modern thought or of vulgarly instrumentalising him toward the clarification of other disciplines, for it is only an application of the universally acknowledged principle that our understanding of the past cannot be independent of our roots in the present. A great lesson of our times is that an epistemology of total objectivity is logically impossible. Knowledge is recognitive in greater measure than it is cognitive, and to that extent it is a hermeneutical product, necessarily conditioned by the pre-understanding that those who seek it unavoidably bring to it. This is true in all fields, but it is especially consequential in the historical sciences, where man is both the subject and the object of research. To be sure, historical discourse depends principally on its object of investigation and narration, but it is also governed by the peculiar historicity of the researcher and shaped by the literary form in which it is cast.³ Though much practical criticism is tacitly and anachronistically anchored to the assumption that the attainment of Rankean objectivity is only methodologically difficult but not logically impossible, theory has taken full cognizance of the consequences of this new conception of historical discourse and has already explored some of its implications for various disciplines.

But first a few technical details. The course on which this proposal is based is offered by the Department of Italian Studies and is available to all graduate students at the University of Toronto with an adequate reading knowledge of Italian, though in the past it has been taken only by students enrolled in Italian literature, Italian linguistics, and comparative literature. Ideally a course on Vico should consist of a total of 52 class hours, distributed in 26 two-hour sessions over two terms. The texts should include the poem

Affetti di un disperato, selections from the Latin works *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* and *De antiquissima italorum sapientia*, the autobiography, the letter to Gherardo degli Angioli on Dante, the posthumous work known as *Discoverta del vero Dante*, the oration *De mente heroica*, and the complete text of the *Scienza nuova* of 1744. These works, including those originally in Latin, can be studied in Nicolini's one-volume edition of the *Opere* (Ricciardi, 1953); other editions can be consulted in the case of controversial passages or philologically improved readings. The course should be structured as a seminar and should be conducted in Italian. The minor works should be discussed in the first term; the *Scienza nuova*, in the second. If only one term is available, the course should be restricted to *Scienza nuova*. The analysis of the textual material in each class should be focused on one (possibly two) of the topics that Vico deals with in that selection; this topic can then be treated as a conceptual centre of gravity for the discussion of less prominent issues and ancillary problems. Because at the University of Toronto the course is offered in the context of a literature programme, issues pertaining to literary theory are consciously highlighted. Furthermore, the privileging of individual issues in class discussions and the actual choice of texts for the entire course necessarily correspond to a general view of Vico and of the task of Vico studies which is intended to condition the perception of his thought that the students will have when they leave the course.

North American students are in general culturally unsuited to pursue training in Vico philology, since in our universities they do not have sufficient access to the propaedeutics and materials of textual criticism in eighteenth-century Italian programmes and since their coming to Vico is primarily motivated by a need to reach a more rewarding cultural self-understanding. This, on the other hand, makes them better suited than Italian students for a fruitful *appropriation* of Vico, that is to say for the philosophical reception of his work rather than the historical scansion of his texts. In such a context the history of philosophy, of which Vico comprises an ever more prominent chapter, makes good pedagogical sense only if we stress the second term of the expression, only if we regard it as a propaedeutic to the analysis of fundamental problems rather than as a species of philology or an archeological introduction to original thinking. But to study the history of philosophy philosophically—which is to study it in a profoundly Vichian manner—is to enter a realm of perpetual contemporaneity and to engage in dialogue with those thinkers who have themselves grappled with issues that still challenge the world of intelligence.

It logically follows from these considerations that a North American monographic course on Vico must have two foci: the text, from which to extract, by historically responsible exegesis, Vico's teaching on a given issue, and the analogous contemporary reflections on which such teaching can be logically brought to bear. The aim is to engage them in reciprocal illumination by letting them in turn assume the roles of *explicans* and *explicandum*, so that

one may come to determinateness in the clarity of the other and vice versa. The pedagogical task is, firstly, to articulate the text's teaching in a manner recognizable to the students as philosophically significant, which is to say in a manner employing the parameters of the chief humanistic debates of our times; and, secondly, to point out how the theoretical concerns that emerge in the spectrum of disciplines which comprise the students' chief interests and background recall Vico, both actually—as an explicit philological point of reference in their self-understanding as areas of inquiry, and as an implicit subtextual presence in their self-elaboration as explanatory theories—and potentially, in the challenge or aid that he can offer to their line of original thinking. The methodological presupposition all throughout is that the real understanding of a text in the present is possible only when the text is allowed to come to life *hic et nunc*, and thereby collaborate with the reader in the pursuit of meaning, which is finally reached—so modern hermeneutics teaches us—when the text's and the reader's distinct cultural horizons come together in mutual integration and reciprocal illumination.⁴

The first effort, therefore, must be to sketch out the text's philosophical horizon in the eighteenth century. Accordingly, I structure the first hour of each class along the lines suggested by the first three of the following questions:

- (1) In the context of the issue under discussion, what need was there in contemporary philosophy that Vico sought to meet?

The circumscription of this space, on which Vico's thinking came to stand, cannot be accomplished without enlisting the aid of the history of ideas in the European, Italian and Neapolitan perspectives. In order to enable students to face this question meaningfully, the bibliography must be carefully selected for them. The most basic tools, such as the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* and the journals devoted to this discipline as well as the chief monographic treatments of key concepts in western intellectual history, frequently lie outside the range of Vico bibliography or else are marginal to it. But for many aspects of Vico's thought there are original and controversial studies along these lines—such as the truly exemplary ones by Gustavo Costa (cf. Pietropaolo 275–77)—which conveniently gather the necessary texts and set them in meaningful relation to the historical and geographical coordinates of Vico's intellectual world. In order to understand some of the most important bibliographical material, however, students must be given sufficient critical orientation, since the delimitation of this space is the subject of an ongoing and influential polemic between, on the one hand, Eugenio Garin, for whom Vico was fully in tune with the intellectual life of the eighteenth century, and, on the other hand, Paolo Rossi and, till his recent death, Arnaldo Momigliano, who maintain the familiar thesis of Vico's isolation from his contemporaries, albeit they see him as being behind his times rather than ahead of them. The purpose of this part of the seminar is therefore twofold: to demarcate the

space that Vico claimed for his thinking *vis-à-vis* his contemporaries and to discuss current trends in Vico scholarship.

(2) What perception did Vico have of his attempt to meet that need?

The answer to this question comprises the basic expository part of the seminar in relation to Vico's self-understanding, as this is revealed to us in the philosophical works themselves as well as in his autobiographical, epistolary and other exegetical references to them. Students are encouraged to become familiar with the specialized bibliography, to seek out and critically consider the theoretical premises of the scholars who have glossed the passages in question, and to present Vico's ideas as answers to questions suggested by the history of the idea under discussion and by the contemporary and quasi-contemporary understanding of the same issues. The purpose of the exercise is to articulate the meaning that the texts propose to carry in their own world and thus to complete the picture drawn in the answer to the first question. This means interpreting Vico's ideas in terms of the historico-geographical cultural co-ordinates of the setting in which Vico's thought took shape. The starting point for such an analysis is Nicolini's *Commento storico*, integrated with the many exegetical articles that have appeared in recent years, especially in connection with the several symposia that have taken place in Europe and in North America since 1968. The attempt to understand Vico in relation to the history of ideas and the cultural debates of his time then leads us to appraise Vico's reflections on other works, distinguishing between the legitimate *exegesis*—that is, expositions logically unassailable from the historico-geographical perspective described in the first exercise—and the imaginative *eisegesis* that he rehearsed on the authors against whom he sought conceptual self-definition.

(3) What perception did Vico's early readership have of his view of the philosophical picture of his day?

The purpose of this question is to enable the students to see whether, in the estimation of the philosophical community to which he belonged and from which he constantly sought approval, Vico had the correct understanding of the task of philosophy and was successful in his attempt to carry it out himself. Here more than elsewhere students are in need of bibliographical guidance if they are not to be led astray by the neo-idealistic account of Vico's contemporary reception. As well they are in need of a firm hermeneutical orientation if they are not to regard the study of Vico's contemporary reception as an anachronistic instance of the neopositivist preoccupation with the fortunes of an author. Our purpose is to establish Vico's dialogue with his age, and in this task an adequate knowledge of his reception is of absolutely fundamental significance. The increasing currency that the reader-response hermeneutics of the school of Konstanz enjoys in North America will soon no doubt render most students sensitive to the question of the early reception of any text, but

at the moment the point must be duly stressed: Vico's reception is our only empirical avenue to the horizon of expectations that surrounded his works upon publication and a verifiable means of assessing Vico's real dialogue with his time. In conjunction with the answers to the first two questions, this account of his reception establishes the purported and actual meanings of Vico in the intellectual life of his day, delimits the ground on which he spoke to his contemporaries, and offers an appraisal of what they heard him say in relation to what he did not or could not say.

The second hour of each class is devoted to the meaning that the text under discussion has or can have in our own cultural context, that is to say in the North American academic milieu of the 1990's. The aim here is not the analytical domination of the text from the vantage point of historical detachment, such as would seek to congeal it in its original philological appearance. Nor is it the subservient reception of its teaching without subjecting it to the challenge of modern perspectives. The aim is rather to let the thinking found in the text come to stand as the reader's dialectical partner in a collaborative examination of the issues at hand. Whereas in the first part of the class the students are anchored to the text—which is considered against its philological and philosophical backgrounds, in its purport and in its reception—here they are encouraged to look at what the text points to when it is allowed to transcend its historicity and to enter the contemporaneity of dialogue. This is articulated in the following four questions:

- (4) What categorical apparatus is necessary in order to establish Vico's conceptual link with modern disciplines?

The purpose of this exercise is to warn students that theoretically and empirically unjustifiable associations border on arbitrariness and are the fruit of unrigorous thinking. The pitfall to avoid is the easy category of the "precursor," which brings with it by implication the logically suspect and empirically untenable thesis of Vico's isolation from his contemporaries. The revival of Vico studies that has taken place in the past two decades or so has produced one category capable of vindicating the modernity of his thought without severing it from the milieu in dialogue with which it attained self-articulation, and this is Tagliacozzo's idea of Vico as a "pioneer," understood as a historically conditioned founder of a line of thinking which was sufficient and complete in relations to its age but susceptible of growth and ever greater fruition in later times.⁵ The full categorical implications of this metaphor have not been completely realized by the scholarly community, and consequently even some of the most careful modern reclaimers of Vico have at times slipped into the error of historical anticipation.

- (5) In what disciplinary contexts can the aspect of Vico under examination come to life again?

This is a preliminary question, but it is fundamental in the literal sense of the

word, since it seeks to define the cultural space that can recall Vico's thought to presence as a vital force in the evolution of ideas. For the exercise to be meaningful, the disciplines chosen for each class—and they may obviously vary from class to class—must be already familiar to the students, even if in a vague and informal manner. I have found that the principal ones at the University of Toronto are humanism (in Ernesto Grassi's understanding of the term), phenomenological hermeneutics, rhetoric, semiotics, literary theory, psychoanalysis, linguistics and deconstruction. These are areas in which there is no shortage of Vico-related literature; the most recent issues of *New Vico Studies* attest to the liveliness of Vico-related research in these and other disciplines and are invaluable tools for the bibliographical organization of this part of the course, as are the systematic *Bibliography of Vico in English* compiled by Tagliacozzo, Verene and Rumble, and the yearly supplements provided in the journal. This bibliographical material, however, has to be patiently sorted out by the instructor according to the Vichian topics discussed in each class, or else it will not be accessible or useful to most students.

- (6) What aspects of the Vichian issue in question can meaningfully retain their original philological form in other disciplinary settings?

The identification of that part of Vico's philosophy which is still meaningful and normative in our own day must begin with those ideas whose current validity or whose implications for modern thought are self-evident. Much work has already been done in the critical literature on Vico and modern thinkers, albeit usually with the hermeneutical purpose of establishing the spiritual filiation of the accepting disciplines rather than the actual vitality of Vico's thought forms *vis-à-vis* the self-elaboration of those areas of enquiry. But regardless of whether they first encounter the issue in the critical literature or directly in the primary sources in question, students familiar with the basics of the embedding disciplines have no difficulty recognizing the modernity of the principal Vichian ideas that they enclose, since in all such cases the affinity is revealed either by direct reference or by cognate articulation. To quote three related examples, the *verum-factum* epistemology as examined from the vantage point of the reader-reception hermeneutics of Hans Robert Jauss (52–54), the concept of *sensus communis* as analysed in the context of philosophical hermeneutics by Hans Georg Gadamer (19–24), and the principle that in our perception of reality we see projections of our mental structures as found in Mario Valdes' elaboration of phenomenological hermeneutics in the sphere of literary studies (5–26)—these ideas do not appear to be in the least incongruous with the taxonomy and thought forms of modern philosophy or to require any cultural translation and adaptation for their proper understanding. The hermeneutical task presupposed in all such cases is simply the interpretation of the Vichian ideas in a manner that respects their context of origin while conferring upon them a centrality which they can manifest only for the embedding theories themselves. Interpretation

and conferral of centrality are two inseparable phases of understanding as appropriation, which is to say understanding as a drawing into the horizon of the accepting discipline, be it as a concurrent agent or a colliding force. Through this process Vico is explicitly interrogated; his presence in the embedding theory is a record of his contribution to the dialectical search for meaning. But he is also allowed to interrogate: the manner in which the orientation of the ensuing argument depends upon his presence is a record of the theory's response to his challenge.

The chief aim of this hermeneutical analysis of such explicit appropriations of Vichian insights is to show the students that a carefully selected bibliography of Vico related research in the humanities may be for them a resource of suggestions for an analogous treatment of other ideas. The conceptual frameworks that the students inevitably bring to class from other disciplines need no longer be held in check, as they must in the earlier exegetical exercise where they could impede the proper penetration of the text. They may now be allowed to interact creatively with Vico's ideas, interpreting them in terms of their disciplines of origin and, in turn, rearticulating themselves from a Vichian standpoint. As the parameters of the students' academic *Sitz im Leben*, in which Vico is summoned to dialogue, they in fact constitute his historical opening to the present.⁶

- (7) What aspects of the Vichian issue under examination must be rearticulated in modern terms before a fruitful encounter can take place?

Like all seminal thinkers who can claim rightful entry into the eternal contemporaneity of philosophical relevance, Vico is both anchored to and transcends the cultural co-ordinates of his *Sitz im Leben*. He transcends them in so far as he brought his science to bear on some primordial questions of the philosophy of man in history; and he is anchored to them in so far as his thinking and language acquired their characteristic determinateness in interaction with the cultural life of his age. Consequently, some aspects of his philosophy, being as they are responses to a variety of historical stimuli, cannot claim to be meaningful and normative beyond those co-ordinates in their original form. Thus his use of the language of the humoralist tradition—as in his letter to Gherardo degli Angioli of 26 December 1725—in order to define basic psychological types that they subsume has clearly some challenging implications for our concern with the psychology of artistic creation and the progress of literary history. Similarly, his diatribe against the Port-Royal educators is only of archeological interest to us, but his rejection of all forms of rationalism, viewed in the context of Grassi's rehabilitation of the humanist tradition, has clear implications for the development of current philosophy. Most students who read Vico have smatterings of Chomsky and have some familiarity not only with the technical aspects of his theory of syntax but with its Port-Royalist philosophical roots. The principle that motivated Vico to reject Port Royal rationalism is a truth that transcends the historicity of

its articulation if it is a hermeneutically separated from it. In other words, understanding as appropriation must be preceded in such cases by the separation of what is exclusively eighteenth-century material, an expression of the language (in the widest sense of the term) and cultural stimuli of the time, from the concepts that such material manifests and can be transcended by. The issue is not unlike the one faced by Vico himself when he sought to separate the *certum* of the law, or the literally expressed will to act in a given way, from its *verum*, which is the philosophical principle that informs that will, or the spirit of the law that transcend the circumscription of its letter. Clearly only the spirit can have challenging implications for the self-understanding of a later age. The pedagogical task is thus resolved into a hermeneutical process analogous to Bultmannian demythologisation,⁷ into an act, that is, that abstracts principles from the historically conditioned philosophical form they have in texts and rearticulates them through such modern thought forms and vocabulary as can come to us from philosophy, linguistics, semiotics and hermeneutics. However, it must be clearly understood that this is not a superimposition of modern concepts on Vico, but their instrumental use in the effort to bring out the implications that Vico's thought can have for us today.

These seven exercises, ideally carried out—though with varying degrees of emphasis—in every class of a syllabus based on the topical distribution of Vico's philosophy in a two semester programme, comprise the model that I would propose to those readers of *Quaderni d'italianistica* who are institutionally able to offer a course on his philosophy. It is a model that aims at the recovery of Vico without subjecting him to compromising assimilations. Sceptics may here recall a famous paper by Pietro Piovani, who, in 1969, at the beginning of the international revival of Vico studies to which the current North American interest in his philosophy owes its existence, outlined with clarity and authority the tasks of Vico scholarship for the last decades of this century. In that paper Piovani issued a warning to the effect that those admirers of Vico who understand their philosophical relations to him as one of spiritual filiation must proceed with great caution if they are not to turn him into a vehicle of "discorsi non suoi" (93). The risk is clearly there, and it is of daunting magnitude, but it must not become the limit of our thinking. The point of the association of Vico to modern thought is to look for mutual reinforcement and clarification and not to conceal tension and to force assimilation. It is a task that must be approached with great respect for both the responsibility of our own intelligence and the integrity of Vico's thought. The purpose of modern terms, distinctions, and comparisons is not to superimpose our world on his but to draw out more clearly the implications and significance that his thought has for us today.

NOTES

- 1 As recently as 1983 Tagliacozzo observed that there were "still practically no courses on Vico in colleges or universities" (111).
- 2 For a detailed treatment of North American Vichianism see my article.
- 3 I am thinking especially of White.
- 4 The basic text in this connection is Gadamer.
- 5 See his preface to *Vico: Past and Present* ix-x, and my analysis of the question (Pietropaolo 265-68).
- 6 For the hermeneutical significance of this concept, see Buss.
- 7 The texts by Rudolf Bultmann that I have here in mind are: "The Problems of Hermeneutics," and "The Case for Demythologization," in Bultmann and Jasper—I cite this edition, rather than the more standard ones in English, because it contains Karl Jasper's critique of Bultmann's method. On Bultmannian hermeneutics see also McKnight 65-71, and Mazzeo 129-154.

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Il poeta in pubblico negli anni Settanta

Giovanna A. Wedel

Dagli albori del secolo si discute
se la poesia sia dentro o fuori.
Dapprima vinse il dentro, poi contrattaccò duramente
il fuori e dopo anni si addivenne a un forfait
che non potrà durare perché il fuori
è armato fino ai denti. (604)

Con questi versi tratti dal *Quaderno di quattro anni* del 1977, Montale riflette sul fenomeno di svalutazione del codice di scrittura poetica verificatosi negli anni Settanta a favore di una semantizzazione possibile oltre i limiti del testo. Tale osservazione metatestuale si inserisce nel lungo dibattito sullo sviluppo e sul rinnovamento della poesia, apertosi nel dopoguerra e non ancora concluso. Le radici dell'attuale e a lungo discussa crisi della poesia sono da ricercarsi già nelle propaggini dell'Ermetismo estenuato e scaduto ad eloquenza di maniera; ad esso si opposero i poeti della quarta generazione che produssero una poesia dal tono minore, operando una demistificazione estetica della lingua e aprendo la via agli sperimentalismi. Le esperienze sempre più radicali dell'avanguardia degli anni Sessanta che determinarono un allontanamento deciso dei lettori, suscitarono in tutti il sospetto che la poesia, ormai priva di un messaggio significante, avesse perduto ogni funzione o ragione d'essere in una società tecnologica e di comunicazioni di massa. E alla fine degli anni Sessanta l'estrema riduzione sensica e segnica subita dal linguaggio diffuse una sfiducia generalizzata nelle possibilità comunicative e nella validità della scrittura poetica.

Successivamente, nel tentativo di legittimare la propria sopravvivenza e di instaurare un rapporto più diretto col pubblico, il poeta ha adottato mezzi linguistici più aderenti alla nuova realtà industriale, ha allargato gli spazi tradizionali della pratica poetica e ha ottenuto dei risultati artistici che richiedono da parte del destinatario un atto di fruizione più attivo e pluridimensionale. In proposito si possono menzionare gli esperimenti di scrittura simbiotica di Ugo Carrega e Arrigo Lora-Totino, che consiste nell'interazione di elementi fonetici, grafici e visivi; la poesia totale di Luciano Caruso e Adriano Spatola, fondata sull'esercizio gestuale, invece che letterario e mirante alla fusione di tutte le arti; o ancora la poesia ginnica di Lora-Totino, risultante dall'integrarsi delle parole con la mimica. Ma è soprattutto in numerose manifestazioni

teatralizzate degli anni Settanta che la poesia oltrepassa i confini istituzionalizzati della pagina. In letture poetiche alla radio, alle stazioni televisive, in sale private e in piazza, il testo passa in secondo piano o scompare del tutto di fronte alla testimonianza orale, al mezzo musicale o al gesto fisico del poeta.

Tale fenomeno che si è diffuso in numerosi paesi del mondo (tra cui la Russia, la Germania, la Francia ecc.) è stato avviato in Italia dalle celebri serate svoltesi dal 5 febbraio al 28 maggio 1977 al "Beat '72," un teatro off-off di Roma. Seguirono fra manifestazioni più memorabili, le letture al Salone Pier Lombardo di Milano nel maggio 1977, il Festival di Poesia Internazionale di Rotterdam, in giugno, a cui partecipò anche l'Italia; la Seconda Rassegna Internazionale della *Performance* dal 1° al 6 giugno 1978, organizzata da Barilli a Bologna; le rappresentazioni teatrali della *Sex Poetry*, animate da Michelangelo Coviello e altri a Milano, tra i mesi di gennaio e marzo 1979; la Settimana Genovese della Poesia in Pubblico, organizzata da Sanguineti tra il 21 e il 27 maggio 1979 nel quartiere di Sampierdarena, e infine il Festival Internazionale dei Poeti, organizzato dall'assessore Nicolini sulla spiaggia libera di Castelporziano a Ostia, tra il 28 e il 30 giugno 1979. Numerosi sono poi i salotti di lettura e le premiazioni pubbliche che tutt'ora si svolgono in centri grandi e piccoli d'Italia. In queste manifestazioni la poesia si trasforma in un evento multimediale allestito per una ricezione collettiva simultanea. Il poeta si presenta in veste istrionica esibendosi come interprete piuttosto che come autore dei propri versi e proponendo un ruolo sociale facilmente scadente nel divismo più mondano. Egli cerca di strappare il consenso del pubblico adoperando la parola poetica come uno degli elementi strutturali dello spettacolo e presentandosi come soggetto ed oggetto dell'enunciazione nel rapporto interlocutivo col destinatario. L'attenzione degli spettatori viene allontanata dal segno grafico e deviata dal referente ad un falso emittente; il messaggio originario viene soppiantato da un secondo messaggio la cui codificazione dipende in gran parte dal pubblico ricevente. Gli elementi del processo di comunicazione divengono quindi ambigui e mutevoli e l'esito semantico dello spettacolo rimane completamente al di fuori dell'area linguistica.

Nella cantina del "Beat '72" ogni sabato sera un poeta diverso entrava in scena per proporre ad un pubblico brechtianamente partecipe uno spettacolo in gran parte improvvisato. La comparsa del poeta, attore e interprete del proprio personaggio, non era nuova. Frequenti letture di versi si erano già verificate alla fine del Settecento; nel secolo successivo Edgar Allan Poe aveva attraversato l'America settentrionale leggendo "Il corvo"; nel nostro secolo si possono rammentare le serate dadaiste al Cabaret Voltaire, certi avvenimenti scenici futuristi, in cui confluivano strutture artistiche diverse per realizzare una forma teatrale dinamica, sintetica e che coinvolgesse gli spettatori; e ancora le serate della *Beat Generation* americana (con le letture di Ginsberg a San Francisco) e le letture in pubblico di Evtuscenko. In tutti i casi è

presente l'intento demistificante della figura del poeta e popolarizzante della poesia, che, tradizionalmente, era sempre stata ritenuta una pratica privata e spesso elitaria. I luoghi del teatro vengono adoperati con fini propagandistici per comunicare l'esistenza del poeta o di un movimento poetico, ma non per trasmettere un messaggio lirico preciso. L'insuccesso dimostrato dall'editoria nella diffusione della poesia a livello di massa ha spinto il poeta ad un confronto diretto col pubblico, che, però, in assenza di coefficienti mediatori, provoca una ricezione troppo immediata e impersonale; il pubblico incapace di assimilare o riconoscere il messaggio poetico, dinanzi ad uno spettacolo che non corrisponde alla sua aspettazione, reagisce con un atteggiamento di disinteresse o di rifiuto.

Gli esperimenti di poesia teatralizzata degli anni Settanta attuano numerose proposte formulate nei manifesti teatrali futuristi, dal "Teatro di Varietà" al "Teatro della Sorpresa." Marinetti sosteneva, ad esempio, di voler distruggere "il Solenne, il Sacro, il Serio, il Sublime dell'Arte coll'A maiuscolo" (115), di utilizzare la collaborazione rumorosa e spesso ostile del pubblico e di servirsi dell'improvvisazione per divertirlo con "effetti di comicità, di eccitazione erotica o di stupore immaginativo" (112). Come già nelle serate futuriste, la linea di demarcazione fra Arte e Vita si annulla nella realtà corporea del poeta. La suddivisione spaziale fra palcoscenico e platea scompare in un *happening* collettivo che si svolge all'intero dell'interno teatro e al di fuori dello spazio poetico testuale. Però, mentre negli spettacoli futuristi si mirava a sfidare la reazione del pubblico attraverso la recitazione del testo poetico, nelle letture degli anni Settanta il messaggio lirico verbale scompare nell'interazione con aree semantiche diverse. Ciò si può riscontrare nel seguente resoconto giornalistico della serata d'apertura al "Beat '72," apparso su *Il Messaggero*:

Alle 22,30 un folto pubblico amante della poesia aspettava Dario Bellezza (il poeta di turno) con l'annunciato spettacolo ispirato alle sue poesie "Sodoma ad Auschwitz." Alle 22,30 gli organizzatori degli incontri, Franco Cordelli, Simone Carella e Ulisse Benedetti si vedevano costretti a comunicare l'assenza di Bellezza per motivi imprecisati. Il pubblico reagiva con sdegno da una parte (un gruppo di poeti napoletani erano venuti da Napoli solo per assistere alla serata) e con reverenza dall'altro (ci si interrogava sul significato profondo del gesto provocatorio del Poeta).

(...)

A Mezzanotte e dieci primo colpo di scena: arriva Bellezza e il pubblico che cominciava ad andarsene torna di corsa a prendere posto. Rifiuta di dare spiegazioni del ritardo, ma si siede al tavolino verde con fiorellini bianchi preparato per l'occasione e dà lettura di alcune poesie scelte dalle raccolte "La morte segreta" e "Invettive e licenze."

A Mezzanotte e trenta secondo colpo di scena: fa irruzione Riccardo Corso, attore e regista del mancato spettacolo "Sodoma ad Auschwitz," simultaneamente sferza un pugno al tavolo che precipita verso il pubblico e un calcio al Poeta che rotola con sedia e poesia sul pavimento. Corso afferra il microfono e rivela i retroscena degli sconcertanti avvenimenti agli sconcertati spettatori.

(. . .)

Grida e richieste di ulteriori spiegazioni da parte del pubblico. I Napoletani insistono nel voler ascoltare le poesie di Bellezza. (. . .) Il Poeta riprende a leggere massaggiandosi il fianco colpito. Riccardo Corso si drappeggia addosso veli azzurri e dà vita con un partner a una scena dell'incriminato spettacolo: masturbazioni e dolci abbandoni fra omosessuali. Voci dal pubblico: "Ma che fanno quei due? Perché non se ne vanno?" All'una e un quarto lo spettacolo è finito. Bellezza commenta: "Non ho proprio niente da spiegare. Mi è stata fatta violenza. So solo questo. . ." (Petrignani)

È possibile osservare come l'intenzione autodissacrante del poeta venga pienamente realizzata attraverso uno spettacolo in larga parte gestuale e di sorpresa, di cui il testo scritto costituisce un fattore facilmente trascurabile. Nel tentativo di socializzare il proprio ruolo e di dialogare a tutti i costi col lettore disattento, il poeta finisce col negare la "poesia" intesa come forma d'arte fissa ed eternamente fruibile, dando vita ad un evento effimero ed irripetibile, e perciò fondamentalmente anti-artistico, di cui il pubblico è co-autore. Ogni elemento d'improvvisazione per quanto patetico o scandaloso diviene una componente della rappresentazione che assume risvolti simbolici impreveduti. Ed ecco che il ritardo del poeta punta alla sua diffidenza nella capacità di comunicare col pubblico, o anche solo di scoprire la sfera del privato; i commenti ironici degli spettatori manifestano l'incomprensione e il rifiuto di una situazione poetica equivoca, dove il testo si disintegra in un procedimento teatrale in continua (tras)formazione. E lo smitizzante calcio ricevuto da Bellezza sul palcoscenico sottolinea il ruolo vittimistico e autodegradante assunto dal poeta, e allo stesso tempo costituisce la risposta al suo gesto provocatorio. Altrettanto emblematici ed eversivi furono in successive serate al "Beat '72" la comparsa in scena di Paolo Prestigiaco per mezzo di diapositive rappresentanti la propria immagine, e con la propria voce registrata su nastri; il gesto incendiario di Valentino Zeichen e Franca Rovigati, i quali bruciarono simbolicamente la poesia in forma di barchette di carta; e l'atto sfrontato di Cesare Viviani, il "Pescicida" (nella definizione di Cordelli) che decapitò pesciolini rossi gettandoli poi in faccia agli spettatori. Non mancò il poeta che rimase in silenzio per mezz'ora di fronte al pubblico, mimando così la situazione poetica dell'ultimo ventennio. Mariella Bettarini, nel tentativo di liberare poeta, pubblico e poesia dal contesto tradizionale della sala da lettura, caricò gli spettatori su due autobus e li portò a Fiumicino, leggendo poesie al microfono. Si trattò, cioè, di spettacoli che si mantennero in bilico fra il gioco e la beffa, il riso e l'ironia, e il cui aspetto aggressivo riporta all'operazione simbolica di rivolta degli spettacoli dadaisti. Anche il Dadaismo aveva tentato di ristabilire il contatto col pubblico andato perduto verso la metà dell'Ottocento, e aveva sostituito alla classica staticità auratica dell'arte il gesto scandaloso e provocatore a cui il destinatario doveva reagire polemicamente. Se, però, gli spettacoli d'avanguardia della prima metà del secolo vennero seguiti da un pubblico vasto, le manifestazioni di poesia

teatralizzata degli anni Settanta non riuscirono a suscitare grande interesse o entusiasmo in Italia. Le serate al "Beat '72" dopo le settimane iniziali furono poco frequentate; le serate al Salone Pier Lombardo di Milano e alla Seconda Rassegna Internazionale della *Performance* (dove per uscire dalla pagina si fecero vari esperimenti di poesia sonora e gestuale) non si poterono assolutamente chiamare eventi di massa; in una lettura di Adriano Spatola nel 1979, ad Abano Terme, pare che l'unico spettatore fosse costituito dal gestore del locale. A Castelporziano, dove accorsero invece migliaia di persone da tutto il mondo, l'accoglienza ai poeti fu tutt'altro che lusinghiera. La prima giornata si concluse con un pandemonio di persone che gridavano, fischiavano, lanciavano sabbia e bucce di cocomero, privando i poeti del privilegio della parola. Il pubblico reagiva, cioè, con un atteggiamento di energico rifiuto e contestazione a priori. A differenza dei futuristi che erano riusciti a declamare i propri versi e a trasformare la violenza delle proprie serate in un ingrediente di successo, i poeti di Castelporziano furono inequivocabilmente messi a tacere e spogliati della funzione sociale. La frattura comunicativa col pubblico fu completa, mentre all'attenzione per la parola poetica sottentrò lo scherno dell'esaltazione esibizionistica del corpo del commediante.

Autogestendosi il poeta ha scoperto la paradossale inutilità e insignificanza del proprio ruolo di scrittore. In scena la poesia non consiste né nel rapporto semantico e fonetico dei segni sulla pagina, né nel rapporto audio-visivo stabilito fra il lettore e il suo pubblico, bensì nella parte di un copione o addirittura di un canovaccio da utilizzare in una rappresentazione drammatica mancata. L'unità del messaggio poetico si frantuma in infinite possibilità espressive dei poeti-attori, e ricettive del pubblico, per l'ovvia irripetibilità della rappresentazione. Anche in una società di comunicazioni di massa, per risvegliare l'interesse del lettore, il poeta deve restare con discrezione dietro le quinte di strutture poetiche costruite per il rituale apprezzamento del destinatario sconosciuto. L'operazione poetica, pur nel suo costante moto di rinnovamento e di ricerca sperimentale, deve rimanere fondamentalmente una pratica linguistica, che può arricchirsi di novità tecniche interdisciplinari, senza scomparire nei canali della comunicazione di massa; il pericolo da evitare è quello di scambiare gli strumenti poetici per il prodotto.

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OPERE CITATE

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Whose *Dolce Vita* is this anyhow? The Language of Fellini's Cinema

Marguerite Waller

It is not memory that dominates my films. To say that my films are autobiographical is an overly facile liquidation, a hasty classification. It seems to me that I have invented almost everything: childhood, character, nostalgias, dreams, memories, for the pleasure of being able to recount them. In the sense of the anecdotal, there is nothing autobiographical in my films . . . I could easily make a film composed of memories and nostalgias on Turkey, a country that I do not know at all.

Federico Fellini *Panorama*, 18, Jan. 14, 1980

These comments by Fellini concerning the relationship of his filmmaking to memory call attention to an issue in the semiotics of cinema that complicates any notion of the usefulness of film as a locus for personal or collective memory. In the following pages, I will argue that while a film like *La Dolce Vita* is highly relevant to an investigation of autobiographical discourse, Fellini's suggestion that his project does not stand in any hierarchical, mimetic relation to memory should be taken seriously.

First, though, I will argue that his title—*La Dolce Vita* or “The Sweet Life”—can be construed literally as well as ironically. Notwithstanding the dismay of many high-ranking members of the Italian government and press who wanted Fellini to make substantial cuts in the film in order to mitigate what they took to be its scandalously negative portrait of late 1950s Italian society, the film may be viewed as a positive as well as a negative expose (Liehm 177). As an analogue, think, for example, of the fourteenth-century vernacular Italian poem that offers a scandalously negative portrait of late fourteenth-century Italian society under the ironically literal title *La Commedia*—the Comedy.¹ One of the principal issues in Dante's poem, as many readers have noted, is the effect of its new medium, vernacular Italian, on the way the world and the self are understood (Waller 58–62, 143). By promoting Italian to the status of a language in its own right, not simply a degraded form of the hegemonic Latin which was the official language of Church and state throughout Europe, Dante remapped his contemporaries' understanding of both languages. Latin began to lose its privilege and the appearance of universality that went with it. Both languages appeared more obviously to be technologies of signification, equivalent in their contingency and materiality, though endlessly and suggestively different in their grammatical, syntactical, and lexical idiosyncracies.

Fellini's refusal to take memory as the ground of his films and his disinclination even to call them autobiographical are, in effect, rigorous comments on the nature and status of his cinematic language. Like the *Commedia*, Fellini's film enacts the potentially profound and happy impact of a new medium, a whole new set of signifying possibilities, upon the ways of patterning experience—as it is lived and as it is remembered—that have been elaborated through other, older signifying practices. Fellini's love affair with moving pictures can have “happened,” but it cannot be “remembered” insofar as it successfully transforms the terms of historical and autobiographical “knowledge.” It is possible, of course, to bend the distinctive grammar and syntax of a new medium like cinema to fit older ideologies and structures of perception rooted in verbal, and especially written, culture. I will have more to say later on about Fellini's brilliant use of the American actor Lex Barker, one of Hollywood's Tarzans, and Anita Ekberg, the Hollywood sex symbol, to parody the retrograde cinematic language of the American film industry. But Fellini's abandonment of “himself” to “the pleasure of being able to recount” in ways that are fundamentally and innovatively cinematic is a project or a decision or an event—verbal terms are interestingly inappropriate here—that cannot, rigorously speaking, be presented as part of, or continuous with, the portrayal of life outside of filmmaking.²

My starting point, therefore, will be a rudimentary discussion of some of the properties and possibilities of cinematic signification in general, following which I will look in greater detail at what might be called the “poetics” of *La Dolce Vita*. The fundamental property of moving pictures is, one keeps needing to remind oneself, that they move. That is, whether or not the *image*, moves, the *film* is always in motion. Twenty-four frames in current sound film production, move through the pull-down mechanism of the camera, or its mirror image the projector, every second. This constant physical movement of the celluloid itself allows a great many thing to happen. One of the most striking, as theoreticians of the kind of editing known as “montage” have rightfully emphasized, is that visual images not contiguous with each other geographically or chronologically, not shot in the same scale, through the same lens, from the same angle, or in the same light, may become intimately related to each other, much more intimately and dramatically related than images within the same frame. This is in part because the audience is drawn to participate in relating them. To take a special case, sometimes known as “separation,” where two people talking to each other are shown alternately in separate framings, the audience will combine the alternating shots to form a mental picture that includes both figures (Sharff 59–79).

This “picture” need not be visual, though for visually-oriented people it often is, but has to do with relating the separate images conceptually. (One figure, shot closer up or from a lower angle than the other, may be read as dominant, for example.) Once this process is set in motion, once the audience has been empowered to create such mental images, the filmmaker is further

empowered to play subsequent screen images off against these mental images, and to play mental images off against each other as well. Since the scene constructed in the mind's eye need not resemble any pre-existing or already known physical space, it will itself change dimension and density as the tones of voice, lighting, angles, and distances of the camera are varied. In other words, the physical movement of the film may ultimately become translated into a complex variety of conceptual movements. Many filmmakers make it a rule of thumb to end such a sequence with a resolution of some kind, often a shot of the two characters in the same frame. This resolution both lessens the audience's involvement and tends to direct the play of signifiers in the sequence toward a particular conclusion.

In *La Dolce Vita*, by contrast, separation sequences are lovingly belabored, but frequently unresolved. Marcello's recurring, inconclusive telephone conversations with his unhappy mistress, Emma, are paradigmatic of the film's refusal to resolve, either visually or narratively, the sexual and political conflicts it unfolds. Madalena's unanswered proposal of marriage to Marcello in the whispering gallery of a fifteenth-century palazzo even more pointedly diagrams, but refuses facilely to resolve (to "marry"), the forces at play in the sequence. The fact that Maddalena simply drifts into an embrace with another man in the midst of her extraordinarily dramatic exchange with Marcello suggests that resolution and release are not the natural and inevitable products of the processes set in motion by separation. On the contrary, the curtailment of these processes may always involve the intervention of a noncinematic, and in that sense, arbitrary, requirement that disparate visual and mental elements coalesce in a stable, atemporal or extratemporal, unity—a unity that film is ill-suited to convey because film is always in motion and this motion is always governed by time.

The suggestion raised by the whispering gallery scene is more than borne out by the tour-de-force of the final scene of *La Dolce Vita*. There, not only is separation used to suggest a certain closeness between the two characters, Marcello and the young waitress Paola, but separation sequences alternate with wide angle long shots to suggest a simultaneous distance. The two ways of shooting, in other words, themselves operate in separation to create a kind of separation-to-the-second power. The associations and cross-referencings that become possible as long as these separations are not resolved—and they never are—present themselves as fast and as furiously as we can make them, though the screen images themselves are unusually austere. A few examples of how this scene is working will indicate the difference it makes, especially in how we come to terms with the thematic issues raised in *La Dolce Vita*, that the processes set in motion by the motion of film not be curtailed.

Two medium close-up shots, one of Marcello and the other of the young waitress Paola, each seen from the other's point of view, signal that each recognizes and remembers the other from their earlier encounter in the sea-side restaurant where Paola works. Neither shot gives us a clear sense of how far

away from each other they actually are. Variations in the screen sizes of their images in subsequent shots indicate instead when something—a reaction or realization—is being underlined or emphasized. Interspersed with sequences of this kind there are shots of Marcello and Paola in the same frame, taken through a wide-angle lens from an oblique angle behind Marcello's back. In these shots both lens and angle horizontalize the relationship between the two figures, while their placement within the same frame interrupts the current of their exchange as it is shot in separation. These visual interruptions are reinforced by, though not necessarily synchronous with, alternations on the sound track between moments of deafening wind and wave noise and moments of quiet in which Marcello's words suddenly become clearly audible. Both kinds of interruption—audio and visual—begin to signify, not as naturalistic representations, but as relevant conceptual cues, when we realize that neither the noise of the wind and waves nor the distance between the two figures can be blamed for Marcello's incomprehension of Paola's hand gestures. He can see her hands perfectly clearly, we realize, and, in any case, nothing prevents him from walking closer. The obstacle to his deciphering her gestures is not physical but mental (as Paola indicates when she points to her head). Either he does not remember, or he failed to register in the first place, that she has asked him to teach her to type.

Both the very loud sound and the extreme long shots, then, can be associated with Marcello's inability to make the connection between what Paola asked him earlier and what she is signaling here. Recalling that encounter at the restaurant, we can understand more about why this connection does not get made. (Cinematically, in fact, Marcello's bewilderment may work to stimulate our recollections of the earlier scene.) Marcello's side of the earlier conversation turned upon the waitress's resemblance to the angels painted by the Umbrian artist Raphael. Marcello's elegantly turned compliment, though, betrays a significant pattern in his treatment of both art history and the young woman., Raphael's angels look the way they do in part because the Umbrian physiognomy served as his model. The waitress is Umbrian. Therefore it might have been more appropriate to note that Raphael's angels resemble the waitress. By putting the case the other way around, Marcello avoids the recognition that even the most sacred or captivating cultural icons have their local, historical roots. First by lending Raphael's angels the status of a disembodied ideal and then by assimilating Paola to that ideal, Marcello does just the opposite of what Fellini's film does. He flattens her into a static, two-dimensional image (quite literally when he has her pose for him in profile) and detaches that image from the context that presented it to him. He decontextualizes and dehistoricizes both Raphael's art and the young woman in front of him—a dislocated, homesick young woman who needs to acquire an empowering skill, not fatuous compliments, if she is to find a place in modern Italian society different from that of the dependent and battered women who otherwise inhabit Marcello's world. The fact that in

this earlier scene Marcello was already seeing Paola not as a signifying being, but only as a sexual and aesthetic object makes his later "degeneration" from journalist to publicist seem to us less a change of direction (as he feels it to be) than an externalization of literalization of what he was, in effect, already doing. Eventually it will become Marcello's, and by extension the Italian mass media's, profession to turn people into commodities and submit them to the "hasty classification" and "facile liquidation" from which Fellini distinguishes his own work. The blindness of such a position is deftly figured by Marcello's inability to "read" the gesturing he can so clearly "see" in the final scene.

Marcello experiences external forces over which he thinks he has no control and for which he assumes no responsibility. But the film shows us that it is Marcello's own "noise" and "distance," rather than the noise and distance which seem to him to be external conditions, that separate him from Paola. Once we recognize that we do not have to identify with Marcello, but are freed by the cinematic text to make our own connections, many further potent rearrangements of the elements of this and other scenes suggest themselves. Determinations of center and periphery, foreground and background, actions and setting, may shift dramatically. As the women in the film are emancipated from Marcello's gaze, their actions and words take on new significances in relation to each other. Marcello's phone calls with Emma at the beginning and end of his first meeting with Paola, for example, strongly link Emma's unhappiness (precisely what Marcello was trying to get away from by bringing his work to the restaurant) and Paola's situation. This linkage suggests that Emma's needs and anxieties are not necessarily innate, individual, or unilateral, but readable also, or instead, as products of the economic and sexual politics of the world represented by and through Marcello (a suggestion confirmed elsewhere, when Emma, abandoned by an angry Marcello at the side of the road, is shown contentedly picking flowers). The situations of the women in the film, every last one of whom is beaten or brutalized in some way, speak eloquently, in turn to the malaise from which the men are suffering, a connection it is in the nature of the men's malaise not to be able to make. Marcello and his older existentialist friend, Steiner, fail to recognize their own violence in their reduction of the world, including women and children, to acontextual, two-dimensional images. Consequently, it goes without saying, they also fail to make the connection between that violence and their increasingly virulent social and domestic claustrophobia. To do so they would have to relinquish their privileged (and well-paying) positions as knowers of truth and arbiters of culture, a position that Marcello can still, nevertheless, sense to be implicated in his behavior toward Emma when he construes her suicide attempt as an attempt to "ruin" his journalistic career.

This thread I have followed from the shot construction and editing of Marcello's second encounter with Paola through some of the film's thematic elements is not intended to be exclusive or exhaustive. My interest lies rather in

the way the complicated, multidimensional, multidirectional operation of the film's own movement overwhelms and "ruins" the two-dimensionalizing—the dehistoricizing and decontextualizing—that many of its characters practice and most are victimized by. This is the "sweetness" so to speak, of the life subjected to the gaze of the moving picture camera. It is a sweetness explicitly, pointedly, and wittily opposed to the fetishized sex and violent action which, as Fellini is neither the first nor the most recent, but among the most interesting, to point out, are the mainstays of commercial Hollywood film. Through his use of the two Hollywood personalities, Anita Ekberg and Lex Barker (playing Sylvia Rank and her fiance Robert), Fellini comments upon the anti-cinematic nature of these pleasures and upon the self-destructiveness of a cinema that tries to pander to them. Recall, as one example, Sylvia's reaction when she returns to her hotel at dawn and Robert, awakened by the paparazzi stationed around his car, slaps her. She objects, "You shouldn't do things like that, especially in front of people." Her primary concern, in other words, is with the inviolate consistency of her image (an image, Fellini stresses through her provocative gestures and costuming, precisely of violability and promiscuity). She must always appear the same, off-screen and on. Neither off-screen nor on must there be any metamorphic encounter or exchange. To be affianced to Tarzan is fine, but only as long as the two images simply reinforce—not complicate and problematize—each other. A good sex *symbol*, it would appear, does not in fact really have anything to do with sex. The perfect finishing touch to this deliciously ironic portrait of the fetishized celluloid woman is delivered by Sylvia, who says, with her back to the camera, as if to emphasize the words, "I don't like men. They scratch you. They never cut their nails."

Analogously, the physically powerful, action-oriented male hero of Hollywood film—Tarzan, for example—simply repels whatever threatens his inviolable integrity. In the typical American action film there is very little of the kind of conceptual movement I have been describing. American film stops short at spectacle, the spectacle of larger-than-life, violent, on-screen confrontations that, like the image of the fetishized woman, evoke involuntary somatic reactions, but go no further. No conceptual problems are presented, the good guy/bad guy morality and politics of such films leaving nothing (which is to say everything) to be questioned and investigated. Fellini's joke on the Robert/Lex/Tarzan character is to remove him from his generic context and put him in a far more complex setting where the figures he happens to slug it out with are a woman and the physically unthreatening Marcello. Robert looks less than heroic slapping Sylvia and punching out Marcello, even as they look less than romantic being slapped and punched by Robert. As the three figures are "translated" by the film from one genre to another (Marcello's Latin lover persona already having provided a usefully amusing contrast to Robert's American macho; Sylvia's "sex-bomb" image and Robert's attempts to be a caveman having already proved wildly disso-

nant), we find ourselves in an interesting position as spectators. This is not the position of the knower, of one who thinks he sees through the details and confusions to what really is. It is, instead, the position of the mediator between languages (Deleuze 243–265).³

The kind of cinematic movement I have been describing is creative of a never before seen or experienced time and space—a space and time in which the fundamental activity is not representation, or even signification *per se*, but a perpetual production and confrontation of different systems and logics. The movement aspires to produce fragments, “little ruins,” each suggestive of a whole of which it might be a part (like a figure in a separation sequence), yet also free to combine and recombine with other similarly suggestive elements to create immense and unexpected new fields of analysis and action. It is about *how* we are empowered to see Rome or Turkey—in the relationships made possible by the production and confrontation of the fragments—not, or not merely, *what* can be seen. It disturbs the illusory coherence we lend to geographical, narrative, or dramatic contiguity when we seek to achieve a sense of cognitive mastery.

As a last, and general, example, consider the stunning, historically evocative opening shot of the film and the sequences that immediately follow. A longish, low angle shot picks up two barely discernable objects in the distant sky to screen right and follows them until they resolve themselves into two helicopters, from one of which dangles an open-armed statue of Christ. This odd combination flies past the ancient Roman aqueduct of San Felice, and is followed by the camera as it recedes screen left, casting a shadow on the wall of a new highrise apartment building being constructed in the suburbs of Rome. This opening suggests several ironies. The juxtaposition in the same frame of cultural artifacts from three such different eras, or dimensions, of Roman history is itself striking. We are invited, perhaps to laugh—I always do—and to ask what these artifacts and the cultures they represent have to do with one another. Though envisioning them simultaneously involves no violation of documentary realism—these alignments can *happen* in Rome—it does violate a habit of chronological compartmentalization call periodization that usually keeps helicopters and ancient Romans at a safe distance from one another. Is Christian culture casting a benign benediction on the Imperial Roman culture it has supposedly displaced, or does the Roman construction hugely and immovably remain to dwarf the silly pretensions of its heirs? Does the Christian icon mock the false transcendence of the flying machine? Or has Christianity been reduced to an empty, dead, outward form, taken in tow by a modern technological society? Who is dependent upon whom here, and what is dependent upon what?

Like the sea monster pulled ashore just before the end of the film, this ensemble of images has no determinable head or tail. Not only are the three cultures thus ironized (like the movie stereotypes, made to appear nonhegemonic with respect to each other), but so is any attempt to depict historical

change or cultural difference in terms of stable subjects with stable narratives. Most notably, past and present are not opposed here. All three of the artifacts that we see are equally “present” physically. Their vertical arrangement, which can, in the first place, be read equally legitimately from bottom to top—ancient to modern—or top to bottom—modern to ancient, or from the middle outward in either direction, is clearly an optical effect created for a moment by the relationship between the camera’s placement and the helicopter’s trajectory. The sense that, however fruitfully allegorical, this visual moment is also highly contingent, is carried through in the framing of the shot which leaves the aqueduct without a ground and the helicopter blade pointing beyond the line at the top of the screen. The great stone arches do not signal the origin, nor modern technology the endpoint, of a historical continuum. Either one could as easily be the middle term suspended in a different triad. Most crucially, the very use of three contrasting objects rather than two in the construction of this scene works to challenge the binary logic that so thoroughly informs all the structures of information processing that I have been alluding to.

The shots following this shot begin to fulfill and extend these promises, clarifying the stakes involved in doing so in the particular socio-political milieu of Marcello’s Rome. Experiencing these shifts, experiencing the radical temporality and contingency of our perceptions from the outside, so to speak, is one of the greatest gifts and political tools film can give us. Though Fellini’s film actively denies us the position of cognitive mastery we might think we need, and feel we want, it does so because it takes this position to be conducive to a range of political and psychological ills. Where does this leave the self and autobiographical/historical knowledge? The film might as well be set in Turkey as in Rome in the sense that, fulfilling the logic of film technology itself, it works toward fragmentation and separation leaving new syntheses and unifications to the spectators to perform. We are empowered to *shift* focuses and perspectives, whether they are trained on Rome or on Turkey. In other words, the film’s politics need not be confined to its own setting. As well as knowledge about or memory of a particular self in a particular place, the politics of our perceptions of these particularities become readable. What we gain is an experience of the richness of social possibility—resilient to Marcello’s reductiveness or Steiner’s despair.

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NOTES

- 1 Many Italian Renaissance texts work ironically in this way (and have been misread by less ironic scholars, I would maintain). I am thinking especially of Machiavelli’s *The Prince* in which the yearning for less violent forms of government than that of autarchy seems to me unmistakable in the pattern whereby the efforts of every “prince” whose heinous deeds are

held up as "good" examples of what the "strong" ruler must do are rendered futile or worse by that figure's own violent and/or untimely death.

- 2 A reasonably helpful analogy, the one I hope my reference to Dante will have suggested, would be the trope of conversion. Another would be the Freudian trope of the psychoanalytical "cure." In both cases the self produced by the process of reading or telling of itself in a new way must reach a point of significant discontinuity from the self under spiritual or psychoanalytical analysis in order for the conversion or the cure to have happened. But in these two cases, unlike the case of cinema, the physical bodies of actors are not involved in signifying other, earlier incarnations of the self. Also, unlike the case of cinema, language remains the dominant medium, the medium through which alternative modes of visual and somatic signification are made accessible to interpretation. Thus the radical subversion to the ontological integrity or continuity of the self implied from the start of such projects remains, possibly, something of a verbal game. And if the language in which the game is played out is itself the ground of the subjectivity of which we are speaking, as numbers of philosophers and linguists have repeatedly suggested, then these discussions reconstruct and reinforce the "self" as fast as they can theoretically disassemble it. My sense of these issues is greatly indebted to informal discussions with my late colleague Elizabeth Bruss and to her article "Eye for I: Making and Unmaking Autobiography in Film," Olney.
- 3 The notion of the spectator as a "translator," and film as a medium more involved with translation than with reference was suggested to me by Chapter II, "les figures ou la transformation des formes," of Gilles Deleuze's *L'Image-Mouvement*.

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Concerning *Differentia*

Hugh J. Silverman

Differentia is now two. Two years old, two years later, two volumes old, two sets of conditions, two nations, two cultures, two traditions, two disciplines, two contexts . . . Each is inscribed with a difference. What is that difference? It is the difference marked by the work/labor of one editor. Marking differences. Bringing together differences: Italian and American, literary and philosophical, cultural and theoretical, general and thematic: *Differentia* marks a difference, makes a difference. But what is the difference between *Differentia* and *Differenza*, *Differentia* and *Difference*. Can one say that *Differentia* is the difference between difference and *differenza*? This is in certain respect the enterprise of the new journal, new yet now that it is two no longer new. As one of my Assistant Editors for *Continental Philosophy* remarked last week when the second volume of that editorial project arrived: "it is now a series." Two makes a series. Before it was just a shot in the dark, a set of remarks, but no established line. Now that *Differentia* is two, it establishes a line, it is a series, it is a journal. Hence the celebration is only significant now that it is two.

Why is *Differentia* important? Peter Carravetta will know—it captures his sweat and enthusiasm. But it is we who will have to say. The slight line of difference between red and yellow is not enough. With volume two, there is a course, a train, a track, a project . . . It is not an accident that Gianni Vattimo writes the first essay in Volume One. Vattimo, the author of *The Adventures of the Difference* (*Le Avventure della differenza*, 1980), has identified difference as thematic, as linking philosophy and literature, as bringing together the aesthetic and aesthetic practice. The tradition is that of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Gadamer. The work is his own. Yet there was another book with a similar title: in 1955 Merleau-Ponty published in France his *Les aventures de la dialectique* marking a new orientation for existential phenomenology: the shift to dialectic, a dialectic which Sartre problematized further (in spite of his differences with Merleau-Ponty) as a *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 1960. What survives is the difference that Vattimo's postmodernist replacement provides. The replacement of dialectic by difference is a difference of differences. Dialectic is effectively the bringing together and separating off of two different entities, conditions, concepts, positions, moments, places. Dialectic is the moving back and forth between them. Difference is the between and the frame set forth by that opposition. As Vattimo puts it in the last chapter of the *Avventure*, the *Ge-stell*, the frame in the Heideggerian sense, sets the place for thinking (*An-Denken*), thinking that will be able to happen

in the place of difference. With Vattimo and the postmodernist shift, it is no longer adventures of dialectic, but adventures of difference. And *Differentia* is an adventure of difference.

It is also no accident that in Volume Two, we find an essay by Carravetta on Vattimo's shift from the "crisis of reason" to "weak thought." This shift in the Italian context designates a difference that is of profound philosophical importance, for the issue of break, crisis, interruption opens the space for difference. And while one might be skeptical of the term "weak thought," what *pensiero debole* means is the inversion, or overturning of "strong thought"—namely thinking that affirms without difference, that demands without thought, that insists without a sense of balance, that authorizes with plastic authority, that imposes without listening, without—one might say listening to what (we learn in the Holub review of Valesio) could be called "silence." The traces of silence are manifold. We need to listen to them, we need to hear them, we need to think them. This need is an effect of "weak thought." And so one must not be misled into thinking that "weak thought" is some debility in the thinker, a "broken mirror" (to use Remo Bodei's term), a broken mirror that can be pieced together again. Weak thought is not weak out of inferiority, handicap, or feeble-mindedness. It is motivatedly weak thought, for weak thought marks an unmistakable difference, a difference between strong, imposing, commanding, affirming, dominating, controlling, authoritative, in short, "official thought" and its other. Weak thought is not—not a dialectic, for it replaces dialectic, but a deconstructive inversion, an alterity that does not become the other itself. It is an adventure of difference.

Further the difference that *Differentia* makes is in a variety of contexts. The essays by Carravetta and Agamben are very different from those of say, Eco and Bodei. The former two establish a history, a place for philosophical thinking: one in the context of Vattimo and rhetorical hermeneutics, the other in the frame of Benjamin as commentator on language in history and in the world. The latter two mark a place: in the case of Eco, a place for reading in a context of semiotics, hermeneutics, and even deconstruction; in the case of Bodei, the broken subject distributed through Bergson, Nietzsche, and Pirandello. That for Pirandello, one could even see oneself from outside is perhaps not so shattering. Surviving with remains is Bodei's answer and this is perhaps not so despairing as one might think. Thinking oneself from outside in Bodei's Pirandello is like Eco thinking the text as a web of critical options with active sign constituting the frame. Using texts is not the same as interpreting them, Eco claims. Yet it is also not—as Eco comes to admit following Derrida—entirely different. Yet, for Eco, "unlimited semiosis" is the difference.

The essays by Bodei, Carravetta, Eco, and Agamben recall the international conference held at New York University in 1983 on "The Unperfect Actor: Critique of Ideology and Hermeneutics in Italian Thought." What the 1966 conference on "The Structuralist Controversy: Criticism and the Sciences of Man" held at Johns Hopkins did for French thought in the United States, the

NYU conference did for Italian philosophy and criticism. Here was an event in which some of the most distinguished figures in the Italian philosophical context encountered a number of cultural critics on the American scene. Some of the effects of that conference can be read in *Differentia* I and echoed in Carravetta's piece in *Differentia* II. He was after all, one of its principal theorizers and organizer. Vattimo, Bodei, Perniola, Agamben, and Gargani were juxtaposed with figures such as Schürmann, Spanos, Said, and Rorty. I was blessed with the opportunity to dialogue with Carlo Sini *in sua absentia*. And yet there was dialogue, present or absent, right or wrong, . . . The event itself—and *Ereignis* of sorts—made something very important happen. It opened up a space of difference where Italian philosophy was not just the accomplishments of Dante, Vico, and Croce but also those of a whole band of contemporary thinkers working out a frame of their own. What is important about this frame is that it is not closed. Where the German context is only now deigning to talk to its French counterparts, Vattimo was reading Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Gadamer years ago. Perniola was rapidly becoming a kind of Italian Baudrillard. Bodei knew the work of the Frankfurt school, and Gargani was familiar with the Anglo-Austrian analytic orientation. While Gramsci, Paci, and Negri are not to be omitted, their opening is more of an establishment of the frame. Crossing borders is not an easy thing to do. What the NYU conference announced was the possibility not only of crossing borders but as Heidegger showed in the *Seinsfrage*—leaving them crossed. *Differentia* is a border crosser. X marks the spot it is sometimes said on maps. Here X marks the line of difference, a line that needs to be crossed, needs to be transgressed, that calls for communication, dialogue, discourse. *Differentia* provides the *Ge-stell*. This is a frame in which literary criticism, cultural history, and the fragment all have a place.

And what is the American Continental Philosophy? Difference is inscribed within the very same. Some call it an oxymoron. Others a pro-gramme. Still others a way of thinking philosophically in a non-philosophical context. Continental Philosophy is a way of philosophizing that draws from certain philosophical attitudes and positions that arose or arise in the European context. However, its practice and adherents are not limited to any particular regional space. Continental Philosophy can operate in France, Germany, Italy, or America. And it does. *Differentia* is a new forum for continental thought. It both brings Italian thinking into the American context, but it also establishes these theoretical, philosophical, cultural, and literary modes of thinking as integral to the American Continental Philosophy. Continental Philosophy is a way of thinking which comes through quite clearly in the work of Carravetta and Valesio just as much as in that of Vattimo, Eco, and Bodei. Similarly, the writings of Casey, Lingis, and I would hope my own work are as much continental philosophy as that of Ricœur, Derrida, and Lyotard or Gadamer, Habermas, or Frank. Continental Philosophy is already trans-Atlantic. And the trans-Atlantic is already differential. To say "American" Continental Phi-

losophy is to mark a difference. Yet that difference is of crucial importance to the working out of philosophy in this country. And continental philosophy is not grown in Europe. The exchanges, dialogues, and debates across the waters, but also on our own soil enrich and enhance continental thought. They could not be continental philosophy without our also practicing it. And their practices are also like our own vitality. And further, journals or series like *Differentia* are the spawning grounds for the growth of, among other things, "continental thinking." For *Differentia* is trans-Atlantic in just these sorts of ways. Even more because it opens a space that is not occupied by France or Germany, French or German, its differential character brings even greater vitality to continental thought as practiced here in North America.

The bottom line is that *Differentia* has made thinking come into its own in an Italian context, and by Italian I mean not just what happens in Italy, but rather what happens here in North America as well. It is not irrelevant that *Differentia* happens here. A number of years ago, a young man at Stony Brook attempted a similar project. With the help of Mark Heumann, Adriano Berengo created a little journal with a psychoanalytic orientation, but one open to theory and practice in a wide critical range. The project was a noble one, and one that has been taken on by others, with another orientation, but the idea was to bring together thinking that could be both Italian and at the same time cross theoretical borders. While *Gradya* was an idea worth trying—and continuing—*Differentia* has taken hold in an effective and important way. We wish it well for the future. And in the meanwhile, we must salute Peter Carravetta for his courage, commitment, and complexity. If a journal can be the place of thinking, Peter has found one such place. Agamben's words in *Differentia* I say it even better: "Thinking: we can think only if language is not our voice, only if we fathom the bottom of our voicelessness. But in truth, there's no bottom. Such an abyss is what we call the world" (p. 58). The words echo those of an American thinker, who writes in the "Spring" section of *Walden*: "At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of Nature" (p. 245). The difference between Nature and the world, between things and language is a difference inscribed between the nineteenth century and the twentieth, between the modern and the post-modern. It is doubtless not a difference of lands, and surely not a matter of discipline or doctrine. Whether it be a country house outside Siena or an apartment in Rome, a shed near a Concord pond or a house in Queens, the differences are in the writing of them. *Differentia* provides a context for such writing, where language speaks—out of the abyss (As Heidegger would say), out of *commitment* (Sartre would affirm), and out of *poetic wisdom* (Vico would call out from the past).

Intervista a Franco Fortini*

Rocco Capozzi

1. *È da poco più di dieci anni (e pensiamo subito al Premio Montale 1985) che Franco Fortini ha avuto unanimi riconoscimenti come poeta, e non più solamente come critico e intellettuale. Come spiega questo fenomeno? C'è stato un cambiamento nella critica (e nel pubblico) oppure in Fortini?*

Il pubblico immediato della poesia che viene pubblicata di anno in anno rimane quasi costante, da quasi trent'anni, però è in proporzione all'aumento della scolarità: e cresce quindi in cifre assolute. Eccettuati pochi amatori e pochi critici, il pubblico della poesia che si scrive è di persone che, di poesie, ne scrivono. Racconta Giudici che in treno un interlocutore occasionale, vedendo che stava leggendo dei versi, ne concluse che egli doveva essere un poeta.

La generazione del 1968 mi aveva conosciuto per *Verifica dei poteri*; qualcuno risalì a *Dieci inverni*, che è un libro del 1958. Qualche altro è risalito ai miei versi. Credo che ne sia cagione il piccolo volumetto di *Poesie scelte* a cura di P. V. Mengaldo. L'accesso ai miei versi ha sofferto della guerra che mi fu mossa dagli autori delle Nuove Avanguardie (Il Gruppo 63); ricambiata. D'altronde, dopo *Foglio di via*, che è del 1946, per dieci anni non ho pubblicato un libro ma solo alcune "plaquettes." Solo *Una volta per sempre* (1963) ebbe qualche attenzione. Mi giovò anche il successo della mia versione del Faust (1971). Ero noto per le mie versioni di Brecht e di Eluard.

Per vent'anni non ho concorso a premi. Quello che porta il nome Montale mi fece molto piacere. Fu, da parte di molti, un riconoscimento (a denti stretti). Così è stato per quasi tutto quel che ho fatto. Non mi perdonano, da sempre, certe posizioni e certi giudizi. Devo moltissimo all'attenzione critica e fraterna di Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo; e fra quella di altri, negli ultimi anni, a Romano Luperini.

2. *Scrivere su quotidiani e settimanali, è questo un modo per lo scrittore e l'intellettuale di mantenere un dialogo con il grande pubblico, e quindi un modo per non rischiare l'isolamento?*

Non ho rischiato l'isolamento. L'ho praticato, per quasi trent'anni. Vivo da anni incontrando pochissime persone, evito quanto posso le pubbliche occasioni e gli ambienti letterari, non leggo miei versi in pubblico se non eccezionalmente. Dei gruppi di cui ho fatto parte (*Ragionamenti*, *Quaderni Piacentini*, *Quaderni Rossi*, *Officina*) non rimane più nulla: materia per tesi di laurea. Con le redazioni dei quotidiani o periodici cui collaboro (*Espresso*,

Corriere della sera), ho appena rapporti di lavoro; e collaboro per potere, di tanto in tanto, dire qualcosa; e per *money* (per i francofoni: *le fric*). Su quotidiani e settimanali ho scritto (una raccolta è il libro *Insistenze*, del 1984) con estrema tensione negli anni più feroci del terrorismo e della reazione politica. Oggi quel tono non è né necessario né opportuno. I termini dell'azione pubblicistica sono mutati. C'è un eccesso di autocoscienza che non ha sbocco pratico-politico e rifluisce in moralità e letteratura. Ecco perché, quanto a me, debbo diminuire, in quel che scrivo, il tasso di profetismo tragico e di "scrittura." E poi—ed è giusto—i più giovani non possono comprendere di dove noi veniamo. La comunicazione con loro è dunque perifrastica. E così la partita sul significato di quel che ho scritto si giuoca sui mici versi non sulle mie prose.

3. *Intravede una nuova leva di intellettuali?*

Fino alla trasformazione dello scorso ventennio l'Italia aveva avuto, dal Risorgimento in poi, quello che Edoarda Masi chiama un "ceto pedagogico." Lo ebbero tanti paesi europei e è tutt'ora vivo per i paesi meno inclusi nell'orbita della moderna industrializzazione. Ossia intellettuali che si facevano latori di coscienza critica. Oggi tale categoria non esiste più. La sua goffa imitazione è quella dei moralisti da giornalismo corrente e da TV. Tuttavia—per una di quelle contraddizioni che castigano ogni tendenza a semplificare—proprio il teatrino o il baraccone delle opinioni, istituito e finanziato dalla industria culturale, mentre equipara un qualsiasi presentatore di successo in TV con uno studioso "serio" o con uno scrittore di qualche dignità, finisce col trasmettere ad un pubblico amplissimo e ricettivo anche la parola di questi ultimi. C'è un tempo per isolarsi e c'è un tempo per contrabbandare qualche verità. All'inizio degli anni Sessanta avevo formulato questo strettissimo percorso ancora aperto agli eredi del defunto ceto degli "intellettuali" con un ossimoro di origine evangelica: bisognava farsi "astuti come colombe" [cfr. *Il Menabò*, 1962].

4. *Le accuse di Pietro Citati, sia a lei che ad Asor-Rosa, e diciamo per estensione a tanti critici militanti, sembrano confermare, come dice E. Golino, che la critica oggi è diventata "un blando sostegno giornalistico alle strategie pubblicitarie dell'industria editoriale." Cosa ne pensa, è proprio finita l'era della critica militante?*

Se quella frase è di Golino, penso che abbia proprio ragione. Quanto alle ingiurie di Citati, sono contento di averle meritate.

Che i critici militanti siano spariti, mi va benissimo. La sottomissione dei critici di quotidiani e di settimanali all'industria culturale non si adempie tramite il giornale o il settimanale ma tramite gli organismi complessi che legano gli organi di stampa e di televisione alla grande industria. La scomparsa della critica come strumento di persuasione culturale, ossia la sua

riduzione (avvenuta nell'arco di un trentennio) a mero supporto pubblicitario e promozionale, non fa tuttavia che rafforzare l'illusione — tipica degli ambienti universitari — che sia possibile un'area (quella, appunto, accademica) sottratta al mercato. Certo, è possibile, anzi di fatto esiste, l'attività critica dello studioso universitario è incomparabilmente più 'libera' di quella del pubblicitista che collabora ai *media*: ma non appena quella attività esce dal *campus* per influenzare le scelte editoriali e l'opinione o l'attività determinante, cioè critica, è lasciata nelle mani della burocrazia culturale e delle regole di mercato o il critico universitario interviene personalmente e con ciò, a suo rischio, riproduce la figura della 'militanza.'

Mi trovo molto d'accordo con quanto risponde Briosi circa la 'critica militante.' Egli intende con quell'aggettivo la critica che difende uno stile, una scuola o una poetica; e le contrappone una critica interpretativa che aiuti invece il lettore a dialogare col testo. Egli dice che questa caduta della 'militanza' è dovuta alla incertezza diffusa sul futuro del mondo. Credo che dovrei essere anche più radicale. Tale militanza è, nel medesimo tempo, inevitabile e poco utile. Inevitabile perché, scrittore o critico che tu sia, non puoi di fatto rinunciare a selezionare in positivo o in negativo quel che corrisponde o non corrisponde ad una tua figurazione di quel-che-valga, di quel-che-(ti)-giovì; poco utile perché si tiene troppo vicina al conflitto storico-sociale e quindi istituisce una complicità con lo stato di cose presente che assegna alla letteratura proprio quell'eccesso di poteri che vorrebbe denegati a favore di una prospettiva generale del futuro.

A una ipotesi, in quel senso, militante sono stato, senza dubbio, fedele, sia come autore di versi che come critico. Oggi, mentre, di fatto, e in versi e in prosa, "milito" — né potrei altrimenti — la mia scelta (almeno teorica) di quella che Briosi chiama "attenzione" non è davvero né scelta di evasività o di esteticità assoluta ma è, per usare le sue parole, attenzione ad alcuni luoghi di resistenza "tanto al dominio dei linguaggi costituiti quanto alle tentazioni 'anarchiche' di decostruirli." Per trent'anni ho detto e scritto che la poesia era "progetto," costruzione omologa ad un possibile essere umano liberato. Oggi sono incline a credere che essa sia piuttosto "ricerca di un senso nel presente." Certo, so benissimo che la imminente fine della mia carriera umana mi induce a recidere quella che Orazio chiamava *spem longam*. Ma lo scambio dei tempi (onde quel che è il presente per me può essere il futuro di un altro) riduce la contraddizione fra le due posizioni, quella mia di tanti anni fa e quella di oggi: sì, la poesia non è progetto, "il suo senso non è iscritto nel futuro," dice Briosi, eppure, essendo proposta di qualcosa che non è ancora e può essere, è *appello ad un possibile*. Ma una disputa in questi termini mi pare poco utile. Credo fermamente (d'accordo in questo, con Briosi) che la "politicalità" del testo poetico non stia in uno stile ma nel suo stile che "strania," a forza di forma, il messaggio. E ci rammenta che il poeta vuole essere invitato "alla festa eterna" ma con il suo abito, i suoi stracci, i suoi limiti.

E tuttavia c'è qualcosa di non secondario che debbo obiettare a Briosi. Quella cui consento è ancora una e una sola delle faccie e funzioni della poesia: quella appunto che la pone, come rivendicazione della assolutezza del relativo e del significato illimitato della "misericordia" soggettiva. Perché tra la poesia (in definitiva: la lirica) e la non-letteratura sta l'immensa distesa del "letterario" ossia di quella impurità o mescolanza delle funzioni nel corso delle quali è inevitabile la corresponsabilità con una società e una storia che pur ci fanno orrore. Certo il critico o il poeta-critico che "confonde la totalità libera e irrealistica dei suoi simboli con la prefigurazione utopica di un mondo futuro di libertà" e anche quello che confonde "uno stile poetico razionale con l'anticipazione di un futuro stile di vita" sono nell'errore; ma lo sono solo in quanto credono, appunto, ad una "totalità libera e irrealistica dei simboli" e ad uno "stile di vita," che sono l'una e l'altra due assurdità estetizzanti ed errori filosofici e antropologici. La realtà felicemente "sporca" della scrittura isola invece (e definisce storicamente) quell'errore e autorizza a correggere la parola "militanza" con quella di "parzialità" ossia assunzione del limite e rifiuto di ogni "assolutezza."

5. *Pensa che il poeta possa resistere alle leggi del mercato e dei premi letterari più che il narratore?*

A costo di scandalizzare coloro — che mi sono carissimi — i quali hanno guardato alle mie posizioni di "resistenza" e di "insistenza" per il loro significato etico-politico, debbo dire che oggi non si tratta di resistere o di insistere ma di *consistere*.

6. *La Sua attività poetica e saggistica è una testimonianza di un intellettuale dedicato all'autonomia e salvaguardia dell'attività poetica e allo stesso tempo della sintesi individuo e Storia. La sua è un'arte, è stato detto da Luperini, legata "alle massime dimensioni della storia umana." Per Lei la vera linfa della letteratura è la storia. E quindi è questo che lo fa reagire così negativamente contro gli sperimentalismi che sembrano limitarsi ad agire quasi esclusivamente sulla lingua invece di agire tramite la lingua?*

Sono per la messa entro parentesi quadre di una grandissima percentuale della produzione intellettuale, artistica, musicale. Sono a favore non solo di un'arte povera ma anche (in questo senso) di una società povera. Non perché sia del tutto vero che i processi di raffinata astrazione abbiano leso gli addetti ai lavori, ma perché — a livello dei consumi di massa — invece di fruire della letteratura si cerca (e si trova, oggi) la letterarietà; invece della musica, la musicalità; invece della figurazione, la figuratività. Quel che viene quotidianamente consumato dalla gente non è la letteratura bensì *qualcosa che ha a che fare* con la letteratura. Asor Rosa ha parlato giustamente di "letteratura espansa." La televisione, in questo senso, ne è certamente il veicolo. È qualcosa che, nel suo complesso, ha a che fare con quel che, tradizionalmente, fu

letteratura, arte, musica; ma ha, oggi, un altro luogo nella classificazione delle operazioni umane e non ha ancora un nome. Posso solo dire che, certamente, ha a che fare con il livello inferiore (superstizioso) della religiosità e anche delle conoscenze (laiche) di tipo scientifico e tecnologico. A questo livello (di "letteratura espansa") i contenuti sono fungibili. Non sono d'accordo con il giudizio di Frye. Non solo perché la migliore critica accademica italiana (penso alla scuola di Pavia), ormai da un quarto di secolo è tutt'altro che di matrice direttamente ideologica (o, almeno, pratica ideologia della non-ideologia) e anzi è stata, talvolta maniacalmente, attenta ai valori formali ed empirici (diciamo: linguistici) del testo letterario. Ma soprattutto perché — per quanto questo possa suonare paradossale — anche i consumi letterari di massa si sono venuti spogliando del loro tradizionale attaccamento ai "contenuti" e quindi ai più visibili aspetti ideologici dei testi. *Sempre più si legge per leggere e si ascolta per ascoltare*. Non questa o quella ideologia extraletteraria ma l'ideologia della letteratura in sé ha raggiunto, come valore, come aureola e gratificazione immaginaria, anche una buona parte dei lettori cosiddetti medi. Se, a livello universitario, un testo è un oggetto da studiare prima che da ascoltare, al livello di massa un libro di narrativa o di poesia — che a un tempo era sostitutivo o interprete della esperienza — è anzitutto un esemplare, un campione, di una categoria (diciamo così) merceologica il cui messaggio è quasi tutto nella sua stessa presenza. Con questo, non voglio dire che la letteratura abbia ormai mera funzione ornamentale. D'altronde, lo snobismo di massa non è che una mera espansione dello snobismo culturale da sempre noto. È che la connotazione "arte" o "poesia" fa aggio su ogni sorta di contenuti. Formalisti e strutturalisti e semiologi hanno vinto ben al di là dei loro sogni; per la molto semplice ragione che quelle tendenze corrispondevano ed erano indotte da modi di produrre e di consumare socialmente antecedenti le loro formulazioni teoriche. In questo senso, seppure solo in questo senso, le tendenze dell'ermeneutica hanno il paradossale merito di tornare a proporre dei contenuti ossia dei "significati" in un universo che vive sempre più di "significanti."

7. *Come vede i rapporti tra autori e critici, e tra autori e pubblico? Quale è secondo Lei il ruolo del critico tra autore e pubblico?*

Una volta, quasi trent'anni fa, mi accadde di trovare per quel ruolo una formula che ebbe una certa fortuna. Un critico, dissi, non è il mediatore fra l'opera e il pubblico. Il critico dovrebbe essere colui che, a proposito di una determinante opera, parla di forme del sapere che non sono soltanto letterarie. Ma questa formula presuppone una società organica. Quello che è successo mi ha dato torto. Parlo della possibilità del critico di essere il saggista che parla *a proposito* di un'opera di forme di sapere e di conoscenza, di cose che sono il sostrato (e il concetto) della letteratura, e di mettere in relazione quel contesto col testo, perché la gente si attacchi alla mammella che più

la nutre e non soltanto a quella specificamente letteraria. Ebbene, questo è sparito dall'orizzonte nostro ed è stato sostituito dallo specialismo che è in sé sacrosanto e necessario. Così avviene che i nostri *media* si rivolgano all'esperto. L'esperto, che è spesso un intimidatore, è felicissimo di uscire fuori, magari per qualche soldo, dal suo ruolo di specialista. Oggi non si vergogna più, come una volta, di scrivere su di un settimanale. Questo che dico non significa che si debba rinunciare alla figura dello specialista, ma, a come oggi è impiegato: come una signora che per una festa si traveste da piccola impiegata. I grandi, quelli che una volta, ai tempi dello stalinismo italiano, si chiamavano i "grandi critici democratici," come Lukàcs (ma anche come De Sanctis), non avevano bisogno di travestirsi, scrivevano saggi critici che non erano rivolti soltanto a colleghi delle università, ma ad un pubblico, certo ristretto ma comunque più vasto di quello accademico.

A questo punto il critico è in una condizione quasi impossibile. L'unica cosa che si può fare (e qui mi riferisco precisamente a quello che scrive Cesare Cases) è di approfittare di qualche circostanza, di qualche spiraglio, di un qualunque pezzo di carta sul quale far passare qualcosa che contesti il meccanismo generale, che introduca una piccola lama nel cemento solidissimo dell'esistente, per aiutare chi tenterà di scardinarlo. Questo è tutto quel che si può fare. Oggi lo specialista vive sulla fiducia totale dell'eternità delle biblioteche. Ma noi, la mia generazione, le biblioteche le ha viste bruciare. Questa è stata una esperienza fondamentale, è un *initium di sapientiae*. È come se gli specialisti credessero di poter continuare a fare il loro mestiere sul fondamento che il mondo continuerà, che non ci saranno mai mutamenti così radicali che rassettino le cose e inducano a scelte terribili.

Secondo me una civiltà nuova nasce invece quando si pongono queste scelte, quando si deve uscire dalla città di Troia portando o il papà, o il bambino, o tutti e due, mentre qualcosa dovrà di necessità venir perduto. Dovremo scegliere se leggere ancora Dante o non leggerlo. Invece ho l'impressione che si voglia trovare posto per tutto. Tale illusione è intrattenuta dalla filologia. La rispetto; ma non è la critica. La critica è un'altra cosa, oggi resa pressoché inesistente e impossibile. Quindi siamo divisi fra la possibilità di un saggismo (che quasi tende a coincidere col diario intellettuale) e un sapere specialistico che va, diciamo così, tanto più benedetto e protetto quanto più è insufficiente. (Toronto, nov. 1988).

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* Questa intervista a Franco Fortini fa parte di una serie di interviste che appariranno nel volume: *Di critica di scrittura e . . . Dalla Neo-avanguardia ad oggi* (Lecce: Manni, 1990).

Michelangelo Picone, ed. *Dante e le forme dell'allegoresi*. Ravenna: Longo, 1987. Pp. 175.

Few areas of Dante scholarship have received more attention than the question of allegory, especially with regard to the *Commedia*. Dante himself fed the debate by his interest in literary theory. He distinguished two types of allegory: *allegoria dei poeti*, where a text of fiction conceals a hidden truth, and *allegoria dei teologi*, where the letter of the text also signifies the reality of God's book; thus the stories of the Old Testament are not only history, but also represent a prefiguration of God's will. The hermeneutic techniques which the Middle Ages used to "read" the allegories present in the Bible are collectively known as *allegoresis*. The objective of this book, which consists of nine somewhat loosely bound articles, is to verify the extent to which these techniques, traditionally reserved for the study of the Bible, may also be applicable to Dante. Behind this objective lies the recent progress in the theory of allegory best illustrated by the work of Beryl Smalley and A. J. Minnis, still perhaps only hesitatingly accepted by Dante criticism which largely remains under the influence of Charles Singleton's "biblical allegorism."

How can we define Dante's conception of allegory? G. C. Alessio, in a detailed and well-researched article, starts from the highly varied picture of the way in which the Middle Ages, from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries, understood allegory in treatises of rhetoric and grammar. Some interesting topics which Alessio studies involve the issues of the relationship between the literal and the allegorical, and the possibility of multiplicity of meaning, both very relevant questions today for the interpretation of the *Commedia*. E. Costa, in a close reading of the ideological tradition lying behind Brunetto Latini's *Tesoretto*, manages to further define the cultural context in which Dante operated. The allegory of the *Tesoretto* creates an analogy with texts such as Alan of Lille's *De planctu naturae*, and this relationship reinforces the work's socio-political message. A. D'Andrea brings the scrutiny of allegory into Dante's own praxis in the allegorical mode: he concludes that Dante's poetry exceeds its theoretical framework. A. Iannucci focuses the inquiry on Dante's masterpiece; with the aid of supporting texts and illustrations from manuscripts, he reveals how Dante uses allegorical technique to create a narrative Christian epic in *Inf.* VII.67–IX.105, a passage parallel to a *sacra rappresentazione*. Art history is the theme of J. Friedman's interesting study of illustrations to *Purg.* XXIX: the critic uses the iconographic tradition to show how the reception of the text served the purpose of reinforcing the allegorical message, seen as essentially Eucharistic. The influence of Dante can be measured as well by his relevance in a Castilian *tenzone*, as studied by G. Caravaggi.

In the opinion of this reviewer, three articles in this volume are especially worthy of note, those of M. Corti, M. Picone and Z. Barański: I will try to do them justice within the limited space available. M. Corti's "Il modello analogico nel pensiero medievale e dantesco" aims to define the context in which Dante's poetry and his allegories flourished. This article has two poles, one theoretical and one applied. Allegory creates an analogy with another context; it is an intellectual reality applied to a literary event. The poetic reality uses the "products" of this analogy for its

metaphorical purpose, taking advantage of the situation and using the language of the other reality in a new context. This *risrittura analogica* actually creates a new situation, takes advantage of the prestige of its "other" reality (as lyric poetry became associated with the feudal world) and at the same time integrates the individual poetic experience into certain cultural codes. In the *Vita Nuova*, Dante created an analogy with the mystic tradition which lent him poetic motifs (such as the *ineffabile*) and allowed him to shift and ennoble the debate of the Stilnovisti on love.

M. Picone's article, "La *Vita Nuova* fra autobiografia e tipologia" attempts to lay the foundations for a cohesive interpretation of the *libello* in its duality as an exemplary and a personal work. In its biographical aspect, the work is akin to a Provençal *Vida*, so that the *actor* might be presented as an *auctor*. His experiences have the weight of tradition and a "typological" rather than a properly personal value. The renewal of the character coincides with the renewal of love poetry in light of the New Testament. Dante uses the techniques of medieval allegory to discover the meaning of his youthful autobiography: the "selection" of these facts and their "ordering" into a narrative of teleological order give the ultimate meaning to the work, the poet's understanding of the destiny of the eternal dimension of his poetry.

Barański's article argues that the critics, moving between Auerbach's figuralism and Singleton's moral exegesis, have not shown convincingly how allegory organizes the text in its entirety. Dante creates a "tension" between his poem and the forms of tradition: here, in the privileged *locus* of the *proemium*, lies the answer to what type of allegory he intended. The allegory of the first canto of *Inferno* can be confusing, offering parallels to *fabulae* (like the *Roman de la Rose* in its symbolism) and to the *historiae* of religious literature. The first part of the canto (vv. 1–63) seems to reflect a more archaic form of allegory; with the forest and the symbolic beasts it becomes an *allegoria dei poeti* which establishes a metaphoric (arbitrary) relation between words and their ultimate meaning. But when Virgil appears, in all his historicity, the *historia* seems to over-take the *fabula*: Dante insists on the reality of the journey, thereby connecting to the Biblical tradition of the *allegoria in factis*, which unfolds in the four levels of meaning: the literal, the allegorical (both Virgil as guide and Dante as traveller "ripetono l'esempio di Cristo" by going from Hell to the *loco eterno*), the anagogical (the meaning of which lies in the exemplary structure of Dante-personaggio moving from the *selva* of sin to the Celestial città) and the moral (the *conversio anime de luctu et miseria peccati ad statum gratie*). To the Biblical tradition of allegoresis Dante has added other works in which different forms of allegory coexist: thus we should consider the *allegoria in factis* only for the parts of the *Commedia* which describes the voyage, and not for the multitude of symbols incorporated in the work. In the novelty of the poem's form, as a work carefully balanced between the Classical and the Christian worlds, Dante created the space in which his poetic genius flourished.

DAVID P. BÉNÉTEAU

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J. M. De Bujanda, ed. *Index des Livres Interdits. III. Index de Venise 1549; Venise et Milan 1554*. Sherbrooke: Editions de l'Université de Sherbrooke/Librairie Droz, 1987.

In order of appearance, this is the fourth volume of what promises to be a splendid series of modern editions of sixteenth-century indexes of prohibited books. These

works are being published by the Centre d'Etudes de la Renaissance of the Université de Sherbrooke, under the tireless directorship of J. M. De Bujanda. The wealth of materials contained in this volume is evident even at a glance. The preface to volume III offers an overview of the evolution of censorship in Catholic countries, an explanation of the rationale underlying the whole collection, and a brief section on the particular indexes studied in this volume. P. F. Grendler has written a thorough introduction for this volume, in which he deals with some fascinating details surrounding the creation and reception of the two indexes. In a minute study of the contents, J. M. De Bujanda analyzes the entries in these two Italian indexes by reference to the titles and authors mentioned in previous sixteenth-century lists of prohibited books, as well as by comparison with such special sources as, for instance, Conrad Gesner's *Partitiones Theologicae* and Pier Paolo Vergerio's counterfeited version of the 1549 index. Especially helpful are the tables which show the places of publication of prohibited books, as well as the correspondences between various indexes. Each individual entry in both indexes is then analyzed in detail in a subsequent section. This is followed by facsimiles of the two texts. The volume ends with a complete list of the prohibited authors and works, and printers and booksellers mentioned in both indexes, followed by an ample bibliography.

The aim of the collection, as described in the preface, is to offer a useful "instrument de travail." There is no doubt that this volume constitutes an invaluable research tool for anyone interested in the history of ecclesiastical censorship in two major Italian cities in the period between 1540 and 1555. The volume is designed to make consultation extremely easy: each index entry is assigned a number, which remains constant in all the volumes of this collection. This arrangement makes the identification of any prohibited author or work almost automatic. When all eleven volumes are eventually in print, it will be possible to follow the fate of any author, whether Juan de Valdés or Johann Brenz, in all sixteenth-century indexes published in Paris, Rome, Venice, or elsewhere.

The ease with which it will be possible to reconstruct the *iter* of any given prohibited author or work through the censorship of all Catholic countries makes the volumes in this collection much more than a simple bibliographical tool. To be able to map the various ways in which an author fared at the hands of the Inquisitors is tantamount to clarifying the nature of what was prohibited by the various ecclesiastical and civic authorities.

It may not be immediately obvious to a modern reader that the concept of "interdit," with its various social and political implications, varied considerably depending on place and time. This is clearly illustrated by an example in Grendler's introduction. Throughout the 1530's and 1540's a quasi-toleration, largely dictated by political and commercial considerations, reigned in Venice. However, the victory of Charles V against the Schmalkaldic League at Mühlberg in 1547 caused a tightening of Venice's attitude towards heresy. The consequent order to surrender heretical books to the authorities especially affected the Venetian book trade, which was one of the Republic's most flourishing industries. To this was added the opposition to the papacy of a group of Venetian noblemen. Hence the 1549 index, containing the condemnation of the *opera omnia* of forty-seven authors including Bernardino Ochino, Giulio della Rovere and Pietro Martire Vermigli, met with such opposition that it had to be withdrawn. This episode highlights the difficulties encountered by the Church in defining and suppressing heresy, particularly when the co-operation of civic authorities was

apt to fluctuate depending on historical events. Religious motivations were apt to be overruled by foreign policy or local business interests. The situation only began to change in 1555 with the accession of Gian Pietro Carafa to the papal throne.

Such an example shows that this book presents a synthesis of social, historical, and cultural analysis. The editors themselves are fully aware of this characteristic of the work: "Notre travail se situe à mi-chemin entre la bibliographie, l'édition critique des sources et la monographie historique." This composite character is what differentiates this collection from the work of previous scholars, such as Franz Reusch, who studied the indexes. These volumes are the successful result of an effort by some of the greatest experts in this field to clarify the influence of censorship on Western life and culture. The editors deserve praise for what they have already achieved. This is a precious mine of information, an invaluable resource for consultation, and a series which will throw new light on the *modus operandi* of ecclesiastical censorship and its influence on the lives and minds of Renaissance people.

RITA BELLADONNA
York University

Luigi Monga and Chris Hassel, *Travel Through France and Italy (1647-9)*. Geneva: Slatkine, 1987 (Biblioteca del Viaggio in Italia. Testi 25). Pp. 210.

Sir Thomas Palmer in *An Essay on the Meanes How to Make Travailles into forraine Countries the more profitable and honourable* (1606) identified five reasons to travel to the continent, especially to Italy: the climate; the attraction of studying at a good university; an education in manners; the opportunity to view several forms of government; and the archeological and historical remains. From the travel journal of the anonymous young Englishman and his party edited by Monga and Hassel, it is clear that this advice was well taken. The perspectives on the people and places recorded by the traveller indicate clearly that the company was abroad for its edification and for the broadening experience of foreign lands.

Although the author of the journal is unknown, his commentary reveals certain things about him, as Monga notes in his introduction. He was certainly a royalist, choosing to avoid the horrors of the Civil War. Second he was an anglican in religion; indeed, I suggest he was verging on Roman Catholicism, given his close relations with religious houses, Jesuits and priests during his voyage.

The author exhibited the usual eclectic interest of early modern travellers. Knowledge of history and classical literature, together with an appreciation of art and, significantly, music, merge with a fascination with saints' relics and collections of curiosities which link these 17th century travellers with the ancient pilgrimage tradition of the Middle Ages. In addition, there are recorded some popular etymologies of words and names that rival Isadore of Seville in their fancifulness.

The political, intellectual, artistic and religious concerns of the travellers are consequently of much interest because they provide an insight into the attitudes of the class they represented, attitudes focussed and distilled by the experience of expatriation. Thus, the rather specific and detailed historical observations made in France at the scenes of events which took place during the Wars of Religion have a particular application because of the events in England which the travellers were fleeing. And,

it is indeed possible that their departure from Rome before the tumult broke out in 1649 as a result of the failure of the Monti Farnese (192) was determined because the Englishmen did not intend to escape one insurrection at home to suffer another abroad.

Finally, the character of the young man writing the journal is revealed tellingly. He is educated and concerned with learning, and his sense of irony is delicious. Two illustrations should suffice. When visiting the house of Cardinal Richelieu (not the great Richelieu but his brother) he notes: "Neere that Church is the Cardinalls house, where into wee found in his cabinet more dogges than bookes" (45). And later the diarist notes in a tone of tragic irony that their experiment in the Grotto del cane (Antro canino) did not work: the dog died and was not revived by the waters which "hath noe more power than ordinary water" (99).

This travel journal to France and Italy is therefore another useful addition to the series of texts on travel to Italy published under the direction of the Centro Interuniversitario di Ricerche sul 'Viaggio in Italia.' These books have made a fundamental contribution to the working scholar's knowledge of the sources of travel literature and the history of cultural contact with Italy. It is to be hoped that the various series and the *Bollettino* produced by C.I.R.V.I. continue indefinitely.

Once again, I must take exception to the eccentric arrangement of the notes which reduce their value in explicating the text. And, I must note some carelessness in proofreading (Sandy's for Sandys' twice, pp. 15, 16; knowlwdge for knowledge, p. 26; calles for called, p. 174; Thernae for Thermae, p. 191). Also, the tomb described by the diarist in the baptistry of San Giovanni in Florence is that the antipope John XXIII (Baldassare Coscia) not John III. This might be an error in transcription or a misreading by the author; but it is not caught in the notes. And, finally, I cannot agree with calling *Il Mercurio Italico* the first comprehensive English guide book to Italy: I suggest that honour should go to William Thomas' *History of Italy* (1549) which travellers for the next half century relied upon as their guide, as they did upon Thomas' *Italian Grammar* (1550) for the language.

Nevertheless, these minor exceptions aside, Monga and Hassel have provided the modern reader with an excellent text which will serve for some time to help enlighten that most important of all English continental cultural experiences, the *giro d'Italia*.

KENNETH R. BARTLETT

Victoria College, University of Toronto

Gian Piero Maragoni. *L'onda e la spira. Saggio di ricerca sull'artificio anacronico nel "Conquisto di Granata" di Girolamo Graziani*. Roma: Bulzoni, 1989 (Archivio Barocco). Pp. 69.

Quest'opera molto impegnativa (non tragga in inganno la misura breve) del giovane critico romano arricchisce la serie di volumi dell'Archivio Barocco, un progetto che coalizza diversi centri universitari italiani (Parma, Torino, Roma, Napoli) nel recupero capillare di testi rari, ben motivato dalla volontà di riattivare reagenti letterari quanto mai pertinenti all'attuale stagione culturale. Fedelissimo all'idea dell'Archivio, il Maragoni affronta un poema misconosciuto della metà del Seicento mettendone a fuoco, con un'analisi retorica puntigliosa, la regola compositiva. La quale si riassume

nell'artificio dichiarato nel sottotitolo del volume e si offre come chiave interpretativa, se non dell'intera civiltà barocca, dei suoi prodotti narrativi più estesi.

Il punto di partenza è Tasso, o meglio la struttura "diparabolica," a parabola rovesciata, della *Liberata*, che mostra una iniziale "catadromia" del racconto, e cioè una corsa verso il basso che giunge al termine estremo con la siccità in campo cristiano, cui succede una "anadromia" (15), che corrisponde ad una risalita culminante con la conquista della rocca e lo scioglimento del voto. La doppia direzione del narrato è il segno più evidente di una serie di opposizioni, a tutti i livelli retorici, sparse con dovizia nell'intero poema.

Il motivo dell'antitesi si accentua in Graziani, che aveva tra l'altro alle spalle l'esperienza ancora vitalissima dell'*Adone* mariniano, fino alla presentazione di una molteplicità di punti di vista sul medesimo evento che gioca contro la linearità dell'azione. Notiamo quindi che "la ripetizione dello stesso lasso temporale si accompagna all'adozione successiva di fuochi prospicienti, coll'ultimo risultato di rendere essi reciproci, e commutabili cause ed effetti" (23). Ecco quindi in Graziani, "vero teoreta di differenziali e integrali," erede del Marino, precisata, nel passaggio da meccanicismo a finalismo, la tensione dello spirito barocco: ". . . in Graziani . . . è effettivamente sottesa alla maniera di raccontare una concezione organismica del reale e dei nessi che vi si intrecciano, visti (al di là d'un determinismo capace di riguardare non più che l'apparenza) nella loro infinibile interrelazione, cioè dall'alto di una metastoria la quale discorra per intenzioni e insomma teleologicamente" (23).

Le sapide conclusioni sono avallate da una ricca ed elaborata esemplificazione. Il materiale d'analisi si raccoglie in un riassunto dettagliato dei 26 canti del poema, inserito nel volume e opportunamente frazionato in segmenti numerati. La parte sagistica consta in effetti di quaranta densissime pagine di ardua lettura (zeppe di termini che invano si cercherebbero nel Nuovo Palazzi e in un comune manuale di retorica). Notevole ricchezza di riferimenti, con schede rare ma sempre pertinenti, si registra nelle note a pie' di pagina.

FRANCESCO GUARDIANI
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Gregory L. Lucente, *Beautiful Fables: Self-consciousness in Italian Narrative from Manzoni to Calvino*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986. Pp. 390.

While self-consciousness is undeniably more pervasive in our self-indulgent and fragmented world, it is unwise, if not self-consuming, for critics to mirror this abortive state of affairs. Prof. Lucente has mercifully not pursued this self-destructive course, nor has he pedantically tried to catalogue his theme. What he has done, and done well, is to demonstrate how the question of worldly praxis and literary representation affect both narrative and linguistic consciousness in selected Italian authors.

It is not a standard critical account; it does not claim to be so. Lucente is not interested in the "narrative of self-consciousness" per se but rather the "history of self-consciousness in narrative" (18). This explains his choice of texts which range from the highly self-conscious meta-commentary of Gadda, to the more concrete and reportorial fiction of Silone. This asymmetry may initially lead one to question Lucente's

seemingly all inclusive approach: Will he find self-consciousness everywhere? Yet by very shrewdly manipulating the paradigm of self-consciousness, Lucente develops a unique methodological tool for weighing the import of this style in individual texts where the performance, in itself, does not constitute a *genre*. He thus admirably succeeds in rendering a seemingly arbitrary collection of familiar works into a subjective and poignant reappraisal of modern Italian literature.

Lucente has limited himself to Italian authors because he wishes to examine "real historical changes" not "a priori paradigms . . . of literary genealogies" (21). In doing so he fills a lacuna in Italian criticism which has self-consciously (no pun intended) avoided critical inquiry into the fundamental question of Literary self-consciousness. The 11 chapters of the book (plus Introduction and Conclusion) are devoted to the following authors: I: Manzoni; II: Verga; III: Dossi and D'Annunzio; IV: Pirandello; V: Svevo; VI: Silone; VII: Lampedusa; VIII: Gadda; IX: Morante; X: Calvino; XI: Samoná, Manganelli, Eco. The sections on Verga, Morante, and Calvino are perhaps the best parts of the book.

Beautiful Fables is a major contribution to the study of self-conscious narrative. Lucente provides not only a sustained and informative reading of the texts he examines but collates detail with personal impressions which flesh out the more narrow component theme of self-consciousness. In truly humanist fashion, Lucente affirms the "why" of narrative *hors texte* while eloquently leading his reader into the post-modern realm of Narcissus, where writing is pure desire. A highly readable style communicates a sense of authority and freshness.

FRANCO RICCI

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Matilde Serao. *Il romanzo della fanciulla*. A cura di Francesco Bruni. Napoli: Liguori, 1985. Pp. 264.

Il presente volume raccoglie sei racconti tutti appartenenti alla prima maniera della Serao, e cioè ai suoi esordi naturalistici. *Telegrafi dello stato*, *Per monaca*, *Nella lava*, *Scuola normale femminile* e *Non più* furono tutti pubblicati su riviste dell'epoca fra il 1884 e il 1885. *La virtù di Checchina* apparve, invece, per la prima volta a puntate nel 1883, e non fa parte, propriamente, del *Romanzo della fanciulla*. Ambientati quasi esclusivamente nella piccola borghesia napoletana, e considerati unanimemente fra le cose migliori scritte dalla Serao, questi racconti sono notevoli anche perché costituiscono una testimonianza importante delle difficoltà incontrate dalla Serao nella sua breve ricerca di una voce letteraria al di fuori degli stereotipi collaudati dalla tradizione. Difficoltà tali, che, come ben si sa, la scrittrice finì per abbandonare la felice vena naturalista per accostarsi sempre di più al romanzo di consumo. Non però, come si è soliti pensare, per pigrizia e per mancanza di disciplina (fu Renato Serra a suggerire questa formula per primo), ma per ragioni obbiettive, legate alla sua posizione di donna, e più particolarmente di donna-scrittrice.

Vorrei cogliere l'occasione offertami dalla ristampa di questi racconti per fermarmi su quest'ultimo punto e proporre un'interpretazione un po' diversa dell'evoluzione — o piuttosto involuzione — della Serao, e cioè del motivo per cui ha finito, nonostante gli esordi felici, per dedicarsi ad una narrativa tutta scontata e di scarso valore letterario,

al contrario per esempio, per citare un caso clamoroso, del Verga, che fece invece il cammino inverso, dagli schemi consunti d'un tardo romanticismo di maniera ad un verismo altamente personale. Se propongo tale discorso in questa sede, è perché mi pare che siano proprio questi racconti a suggerirci una possibile spiegazione e perché mi pare che il curatore del presente volume, pur disponendo di tutti gli elementi per intravederla, vi sia passato accanto senza accorgersene, ritenendo addirittura che il fatto che la Serao avesse "sciupato in processo di tempo le sue belle doti . . . (fosse) . . . un altro discorso." La svista è dovuta, credo, in primo luogo all'accettazione passiva (non solo da parte di Bruni ma di quasi tutta la critica che si è occupata della Serao) dell'ipotesi fondamentalmente a-problematica del Serra, e ad un'impostazione che, pur riconoscendo la molteplicità di variabili sull'orizzonte letterario della Serao, poi, all'atto pratico, ne tiene presente solo qualcuna.

Per esempio, per quanto riguarda il *Romanzo della fanciulla*, Bruni attribuisce l'impostazione corale dei racconti al semplice fatto che la Serao era "partecipe del clima culturale del tempo;" anche per il "ritegno, così artistico, del libro," la Serao andrebbe collocata "sulla linea di Manzoni e di Verga, del loro gusto per un narrare privo di svolte fondate sull'effettone passionale o sul colpo di scena." Le osservazioni di Bruni senza essere infondate, tralasciano però due aspetti importanti dell'esperienza letteraria della Serao: da una parte il legame con la narrativa francese, dall'altra la sua situazione di donna e di donna-scrittrice. Il primo aspetto, il legame con la letteratura francese, in particolare con il romanzo *Chérie* (1884) di Edmond de Goncourt (fonte riconosciuta dalla stessa Serao nella sua prefazione al *Romanzo* e citata a più riprese da Bruni ma senza approfondimento) mi pare fondamentale per spiegare il tono dimesso dell'opera, tanto più perché non si tratta di un'intuizione critica; infatti, nella prefazione a *Chérie* è lo stesso Goncourt ad attribuirsi un'aspirazione anti-romanzesca:

On trouvera bien certainement la fabulation de *Chérie* manquant d'incidents, de péripéties, d'intrigue. Pour mon compte, je trouve qu'il y a en encore trop. S'il m'était donné de redevenir plus jeune de quelques années, je voudrais faire des romans sans plus de complications que la plupart des drames intimes de l'existence, des amours puissants sans plus de suicides que les amours que nous avons tous traversés. . . .

Per quanto riguarda le preoccupazioni che le potevano derivare dalla sua situazione di donna, se ne intravedono i segni fin dalla prima frase della prefazione al *Romanzo*: "La prima parola a me, per alcune semplici ed umili spiegazioni, agli uomini, cui presento una materia ad essi sconosciuta, alle donne, cui raccomando una materia ad esse ben cara." La materia di cui si tratta è lo studio della fanciulla "nel vivo," espressione adoperata dalla Serao per distinguere il suo ritratto della fanciulla da quello proposto da Goncourt in *Chérie*. Infatti, la prefazione della Serao prende le mosse da una polemica contro Goncourt, che credeva, a torto secondo la Serao, di aver scritto con *Chérie* un'opera che riflettesse con autenticità l'animo femminile: "je crois pouvoir avancer qu'il est peu de livres sur la femme, sur l'intime *féminité* de son être depuis l'enfance jusqu'à ses vingt ans, peu de livres fabriqués avec autant de causeries, de confidences, de confessions féminines." Alla Serao invece, il libro pare "povero" proprio perché basato su delle presunte "confessioni" — "come se la fanciulla si confessasse mai a nessuno, madre o amica, fidanzato o romanziere sperimentale":

Chiusa come un baco da seta in un bozzolo filato dal rispetto umano, dalla educazione strana e variabile, dalla modestia obbligatoria, dalla ignoranza imposta, dalla inconsapevolezza a ogni

costo, e trascinata poi da un forza contraria d'impulsione a gravitare intorno al sole del matrimonio, la fanciulla si sviluppa in condizioni morali difficilissime. . . .

In questo dramma interiore . . . ella diventa profonda, pensosa, malinconica spesso, scettica sempre. Nessuno più della fanciulla, apprende quotidianamente i dolori e le disfatte della lotta per l'esistenza. Essa vive guardinga, move i passi con precauzione; e la sua anima non si dà facilmente, i misteri del suo spirito restano impenetrabili.

Non a caso la Serao ribadisce con insistenza che le figure femminili che compaiono in questi racconti sono tutte ritratte "dal vivo," sono basate cioè non su fanciulle raccontate da se stesse o da altri, ma su fanciulle da lei conosciute personalmente — "nelle aule della Scuola normale, negli uffici del Telegrafo, ai balconi provinciali di Santa Maria . . . sulle terrazze napoletane. . . ."

Ogni volta che io tento di costruire lo schema ideale e generale della fanciulla, per farne l'eroina d'un romanzo, tutte quante le vostre voci, o amiche, felici o infelici, lontane tutte, mi risuonano nella testa, in coro . . . Tutte queste voci che vengono dal passato . . . mi trascinano, mi tolgono la serenità necessaria a comporre un romanzo conforme alle regole stabilite.

"Mi tolgono la serenità necessaria a comporre un romanzo secondo le regole stabilite": la frase è importante ed è seguita da altre più significative ancora:

Perciò, io non voglio fare un romanzo, non voglio creare un tipo, non voglio risolvere un problema di psicologia sperimentale. . . . Invece di fabbricare una fanciulla, ho rievocato tutte le compagne della mia fanciullezza; invece di costruire un'eroina, ho rivissuto con le mie amiche del tempo lontano.

Si avverte in queste dichiarazioni quanto la Serao faticò a conciliare la propria esperienza del mondo femminile con le eroine e le trame proposte dai modelli letterari della sua epoca. I racconti raccolti in questo volume rappresentano, perciò, a mio avviso, prima di tutto un tentativo di sottrarsi a tali modelli: ed è per questo che la Serao s'atteggia a chi si rivolge direttamente alla propria memoria, senza ricorrere a mediazioni letterarie di sorta. Però, se la memoria poteva suggerirle una quantità di figure femminili inedite, più difficile era, senz'altro, trovare delle vicende inedite da attribuire a queste figure: ed ecco, forse, il perché della corallità. Solo attraverso la corallità era possibile evitare quell'approfondimento narrativo che avrebbe finito inevitabilmente per portarla — o almeno così temeva — sulla via dei luoghi letterari risaputi del "romanzo conforme alle regole stabilite." L'ipotesi è avallata dal finale piuttosto curioso di *Scuola normale femminile*: si tratta dell'elenco dei personaggi cui segue, per ciascuno, lo sviluppo del proprio destino a distanza di anni. Scorrendo quest'elenco, non si può fare a meno di pensare ad altrettanti abbozzi di romanzi "abortiti" (una ventina in tutto). E tanto meglio, perché — e la Serao ne è ben consapevole — se sfuggono per la maggiore parte allo schema moglie fedele/moglie adultera, non per questo sono meno scontati. Se ne cita uno solo, in parte, a titolo illustrativo:

Carmela Fiorillo non ha fatto il concorso, è stata per un anno maestra rurale a Gragnano, ma essendosi innamorato di lei il figliuolo di un ricco fabbricante di pasta, ha dovuto partire dal paese e recarsi a far la maestra in un villaggio dell'Alta Savoia, con la retribuzione di quattrocento lire annue. Non essendovi casa nel villaggio dove era la Scuola, ella abitava al villaggio vicino, e doveva far quattro miglia ogni mattina e ogni sera, per andare e venire. Nell'ultimo inverno,

un giorno . . . ella è caduta sulla via e si è lasciata morire, per debolezza, per assideramento: gli alpigiani l'hanno raccolta due giorni dopo. Il municipio le ha decretata una piccola lapide di marmo, visto il suo zelo e l'amore alle sue umili fatiche. . . .

Non quindi di doti sciupate si tratta, nel caso della carriera letteraria "andata male" della Serao, ma di doti insufficienti—o comunque avvertite come tali—per affrontare il vero assalto al repertorio letterario che un approfondimento della vena verista avrebbe comportato: ecco l'ipotesi che vorrei avanzare per spiegare la successiva capitolazione della scrittrice davanti al genere (il romanzo di consumo), che le avrebbe garantito il massimo di successo con il minimo di rischio artistico e personale.

Se questa interpretazione dell'involuzione letteraria della Serao è valida, allora due opere anteriori al *Romanzo della fanciulla*, *Fantasia* e *La virtù di Checchina* costituiscono le prime due tappe del percorso che finirà per portarla alla svolta—e, purtroppo, al vicolo chiuso—rappresentato dal *Romanzo*. La prima tappa si ha nel 1883, anno che vede la pubblicazione di *Fantasia*, primo suo romanzo a conoscere un grande successo di pubblico ed anche un discreto successo critico. *Fantasia* ha due protagoniste, Lucia Altimare e Caterina Spaccapietra, ognuna l'incarnazione di un *tipo* femminile ricorrente, Lucia la donna fatale, volubile, inevitabilmente adultera, Caterina la donna concreta, tranquilla, altrettanto inevitabilmente fedele. I due personaggi sono visti attraverso una lente grottescamente deformante, in modo tale da risultare il suo dissenso—il primo momento, quindi, della liquidazione degli stereotipi tradizionali. Il secondo momento è costituito dal lungo racconto *La virtù di Checchina* (1884), incluso nel presente volume e oggetto di una notevole disamina da parte del curatore Bruni. Anche qui si ripresentano i due soliti tipi, Isolina, la moglie adultera, e Checchina, la moglie fedele. Questa volta, però, i due personaggi sono visti in un'ottica che le riavvicina invece di contrapporle, non più angelo e diavolo, ma semplicemente due donne che s'annoiano nel matrimonio, una delle quali ha il "coraggio" di tradire il marito, l'altra invece tenta di tradirlo, ma si ritira all'ultimo momento, colta da inhibizioni, paure, sensi di colpa: due facce, quindi, della stessa medaglia. Il titolo del racconto è, perciò, ironico; Checchina è virtuosa *malgré elle*. Il curatore del presente volume, nel presentare il racconto ai lettori, intavola una lunga e curiosa discussione sulla "virtù" di Checchina, cercando di individuarne le cause esclusivamente nella "capacità di osservazione della società contemporanea da parte della scrittrice":

L'ipotesi è questa: nella "rinuncia" finale di Checchina non può aver influito anche (non dico esclusivamente) uno strato ancor più profondo della sua coscienza (perciò fuori del testo e semplicemente alluso da esso), sul quale è rimasto depositato un patrimonio di dettami e regole morali? . . . [L]'insegnamento morale che in lei si è sedimentato, è stato ricacciato o respinto dal clima laico dell'Italia del tempo e più in particolare dalle attrattive della vita di Isolina e del mito del mondo aristocratico, ma è rimasto come ispirazione oscura del comportamento.

Se tutto questo sarà anche vero, rimane il fatto che Checchina è, in primo luogo, un personaggio letterario, il cui significato più immediato va colto nel rapporto con altri elementi costitutivi del racconto, e poi, eventualmente, con situazioni "fuori del testo e semplicemente allus[e] da esso." In questa ottica, tanto più significativi degli impulsi morali di Checchina mi sembrano gli impulsi letterari della sua creatrice, la quale, con la figura della moglie tecnicamente fedele, come con quella della donna adultera ma tutt'altro che passionale, ha voluto soprattutto *rompere degli stereotipi*,

avvicinando il più possibile le due figure invece di contrapporle nel consueto modo violento.

Quando nel 1886 arriva al *Romanzo della fanciulla* (preceduto nel '85 da *La conquista di Roma* che ha come protagonista, invece, un uomo), la Serao spinge ancora più oltre la sua "rivolta" letteraria, rivolgendosi al mondo della fanciulla, che permette non solo di evitare le mogli adultere come quelle fedeli, ma anche di cogliere le figure femminili in ambienti collettivi, quali il collegio (*Scuola normale femminile*) o il posto di lavoro (*Telegrafi dello stato*). È interessante notare che, come altre scrittrici dell'epoca che si battono, consapevolmente o meno, contro il peso degli stereotipi che condizionano così fortemente la raffigurazione femminile (Neera e la Marchesa Colombi, per citarne due), Serao ricorre a spunti o a pretesti suggeriti dalla cultura positivista/naturalista dell'epoca per far passare la sua rottura con la tradizione. In questo caso, il rifugio nella rappresentazione corale — e cioè nel "non-svolgimento" — è giustificato dal desiderio di rappresentare le fanciulle collettivamente nella "lotta per la sopravvivenza" di darwiniana derivazione:

Nessuno più della fanciulla, apprende quotidianamente i dolori e le disfatte della lotta per l'esistenza . . .

Ora, anch'io ho traversato questo drammatico tratto della vita, anzi la varia fortuna mi ha fatto passare, per più anni di seguito, a traverso un meraviglioso poliorama di fanciulle d'ogni classe, d'ogni indole, d'ogni razza. Quello stupendo erbario umano, ove le sottili gramigne aristocratiche s'intrecciano coi grassi garofani borghesi, ove l'erbuccia malaticcia è sopraffatta dalla pianta florida, io l'ho visto vivere, crescere, ramificarsi, insinuandosi e penetrando dappertutto. Tutte quelle fanciulle, mi son passate accanto: son passate, si sono allontanate, sono scomparse, sono entrate nella felicità o nella morte, alcune nella felicità per la morte; -ma l'immagine loro è rimasta in me, vivente.

Ora il curatore di questo volume non à affatto ignaro del contesto e delle preoccupazioni da cui nascono questi racconti. Infatti, egli colloca giustamente *Il romanzo e Checchina* nell'ambito della partecipazione della Serao alle discussioni dell'epoca "circa il nesso tra l'argomento amoroso e il genere del romanzo," e più precisamente di "una sua idea sulla narrativa e sul ruolo esagerato, falso, svolto dalla passione amorosa."

L'idea della "fanciulla," distinta dalla donna, troppo spesso protagonista, secondo la Serao, di drammi passionali, è specificamente legata agli interessi della scrittrice entro un periodo ben circoscritto di tempo, e risulta già obliterata nell'edizione del 1895 che prende il titolo dalla prima novella della raccolta, con un sottotitolo — *Romanzo per le signore* — che indica un pubblico se non più ristretto, certo meno qualificato di quello per il quale aveva lavorato le Serao dieci anni prima . . . Certo l'edizione del 1895 svende in chiave di appendice un libro serio, poco capito e apprezzato dalla critica contemporanea; ma già nell'edizione del 1893 (e poi nelle seguenti) è omessa la combattiva *Prefazione*, che illumina sulle ragioni dell'opera e, come si è visto, si lega a vari articoli che la Serao aveva pubblicato in quel giro d'anni.

Se si tien conto della molteplicità di elementi di cui dispone per la decifrazione del testo, colpisce il fatto che Bruni abbia ritenuto opportuno inserirli non nella "Nota introduttiva" ma nella "Nota al testo" dedicata alla storia delle diverse edizioni e riedizioni dei racconti, come se si trattasse di semplici ragguagli sulle circostanze della pubblicazione, non essenziali per l'intelligenza del testo. Detto questo, il presente

volume ha il merito di portare all'attenzione del pubblico una Srao eclissata dalla recente corsa alla ristampa di opere più tarde, e per di più in un'edizione ricca di osservazioni sulla lingua della Srao, sulla storia delle edizioni, e sulle varianti dei testi.

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Carlo Emilio Gadda. *L'ingegner fantasia. Lettere a Ugo Betti 1919-1930*. A cura di Giulio Ungarelli. Milano: Rizzoli, 1984. Pp. 145.

Durante la prima guerra mondiale tre futuri protagonisti delle lettere italiane si trovarono prigionieri insieme nei lager di Rastatt e di Celle. Sono gli anni 1917-1918 e il sodalizio affettivo e culturale che ne nacque fu fissato sulla pagina, molto tempo dopo, dalla penna di uno di essi, Bonaventura Tecchi, in *Baracca 15C* (Milano: Bompiani, 1961). Viene ora data alle stampe la corrispondenza che documenta l'amicizia degli altri due ufficiali: il sottotenente degli alpini Carlo Emilio Gadda ed il tenente d'artiglieria Ugo Betti. Sono cinquantasei fra lettere e cartoline, tutte inedite, tranne una. Coprono l'arco di tempo che spazia dalla fine del conflitto al luglio 1930, quando lo scambio epistolare s'interruppe. Il carteggio, curato da Giulio Ungarelli, è completato, in appendice, dalla recensione del primo volume di versi bettiani *Il re pensieroso*, che il Gadda fece nel 1923 su *La patria degli italiani* di Buenos Aires. Un'aggiunta, questa, appropriata se si considera che il Betti aveva composto, com'è noto, il nucleo principale della raccolta nei campi di prigionia e non aveva apportato sostanziali varianti ai testi letti al Gadda a Celle. La recensione è, inoltre, il primo scritto letterario a stampa di Gadda e si pone come sua iniziazione ufficiale al mondo delle lettere.

L'ingegner fantasia — titolo tratto da un'autodefinizione gaddiana del 6 aprile 1921 — è un carteggio a senso unico, dal momento che le lettere di Ugo non furono mai trovate. Le ricerche effettuate presso Gadda, alla sua morte, risultarono, infatti, infruttuose come testimonia la stessa Andreina Frosini Betti in un'intervista rilasciata nel giugno 1983. Un lungo monologo, dunque, da cui poco d'inedito apprendiamo del Betti, ma che risulta di indubbio valore per la comprensione dei pensieri e degli stati d'animo del mittente. Così nello "scoramento" del reduce troviamo quella paura per la dimensione "arida e baraondesca" della nuova vita (1 aprile 1919), che veniva poi a giustificare l'iniziale adesione del Gadda al fascismo; come nei continui riferimenti al Tecchi c'è il desiderio gaddiano di non abbandonare il tempo andato. Da un Gadda "poco entusiasta" della sua vita (30 novembre 1920) emerge lentamente, in questi frammenti-diario, una "cognizione" del vivere, che è diagnosi esistenziale: "Il mio gran male è stato sempre e sarà sempre uno: quello di desiderare e sognare, invece di volere e fare" (6 aprile 1921). Ed ancora: "Appena mi accorgo di quello che mi piacerebbe fare il voglio diventa uno stupido e impotente vorrei" (25 maggio 1921). In questo quadro, la corrispondenza è indice della formazione d'una concezione dell'esistenza, dove la sofferenza alimenta il vivere quotidiano dell'autore della *Cognizione del dolore* ed, al tempo stesso, è storia spirituale d'un apprendistato letterario. Il sempre più forzato inserimento nel lavoro industriale non farà che approfondire la tragica visione gaddiana del reale. Dalla relazione del problematico reinserimento nella vita civile al resoconto delle difficoltà finanziarie che obbligarono il Gadda a

scelte contrastanti con la sua vocazione artistica, la scrittura diaristica gaddiana opera "una sorta di metaforfosi in virtù della quale," come puntualizza il prefatore, "la registrazione degli eventi si trasforma sovente in una occasione di racconto" (p. 9). Di particolare interesse la narrazione, in tono comico-ironico, delle vicende legate alla scelta professionale: "Io, ingegner fantasia, con penisole e promontori nelle lettere, scienze, arti, varietà, con tumori politici ed annichilimenti dopo i pasti, mi occupo ora dell'asestamento di alcune centrali elettriche e ho a che fare con rampini, tubetti, valvoline, pezzetti di maiolica, ferretti, filuzzi, vetrini, scatolette, barili d'olio ultra bisunto, ecc." (6 aprile 1921). Oppure la registrazione degli sbalzi d'umore che gli rendono l' "animo rognoso, stizzoso e cattivello, esacerbato dalla nevrastenia" (Ibid.). Od, infine, la delineazione del soggiorno in Argentina, qui documentato per la prima volta in dettaglio. Avvolte quasi nel silenzio, invece, le notizie riguardanti il suo lavoro di letterato; fino al '27, quando l'annuncio all'amico di voler lasciare definitivamente la sua "vita di adultero" assume la forma di avvenimento letterario: presentandosi colle connotazioni proprie dell'artista romanticizzato, il Gadda dichiara di temere "la soffitta, le scarpe rotte" e "il pane presso la fontana," mentre deride i suoi "gusti vigliacchi" che reclamano "gli spaghetti alle vongole, le fragole al marsala, e buone scarpe" (16 luglio 1927). Nella rappresentazione letteraria degli stati d'animo gaddiani, l'epistolario offre pagine di vera ispirazione artistica, che superano il mero dato biografico.

Negli anni Sessanta, il Gadda, come Tecchi, avrebbe trasposto in esperienza letteraria il periodo della prigionia. Ne *Il castello di Udine* (Torino: Einaudi, 1961), egli richiama del Betti la "calma fermissima" e la "natura apollinea" (p. 60); nel *Giornale di guerra e di prigionia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1965), egli ricorda la sua sincera commozione dinanzi alle segrete letture poetiche bettiane. La delineazione che Gadda offre dell'amico nello scambio epistolare conferma questo affettuoso ritratto futuro; eppure, qui l'immagine di un Betti bello e prediletto della vita diviene progressivamente l'antitetica proiezione del Gadda mdesimo. L'ingegnere ramingo per il mondo si reputa meno fortunato dell'amico giudice, cui il destino pare arridere su tutti i fronti e, col trascorrere del tempo, si afferma, in Gadda, il bisogno di prendersi una rivalsa sulle ingiustizie con cui l'esistenza lo assilla, di uscire da quella trappola che la sua fantasia innalza a fatalistica lotta.

Il carteggio si ferma al 1930, anno del matrimonio del Betti con Andreina Frosini. Sui motivi della rottura può solo intervenire la speculazione. Dopo una breve visita fatta agli sposi, il Gadda apparentemente scomparve dal giro dalle amicizie bettiane. Il cammino dei due letterati seguiva ormai strade divergenti, ma negli anni del rapporto epistolare l' "ingegner fantasia" condivide una comunanza spirituale indubbia con Ugo Betti, il quale a sua volta, secondo gli esordi epistolari dello stesso Gadda, sembra corrispondere puntualmente, spesso sollecitando una risposta dall'amico.

Ricordando il Gadda del Blocco C, il Tecchi avrebbe caratterizzato i lineamenti del futuro letterato nel prigioniero che covava già dentro di sé "quel fondo d'amarezza, quell'estro di ribellione contro la vita, contro il destino di uno e di tutti" (*La fiera letteraria*, 26 marzo 1961, p. 1). Questo diario d'una amicizia giovanile conferma, s'è visto, simile disposizione gaddiana al vivere, che diverrà, nel tempo, cognizione esistenziale del male infinito.

Nicola Merola, ed. *Il poeta e la poesia*. Napoli: Liguori Editore, 1986. Pp. 216.

Questo volume raccoglie prolusioni, poesie, commenti alle poesie e dibattito pubblico di un convegno tenutosi all'Università di Roma i giorni 8-10 febbraio 1982. A distanza di cinque anni, gli scritti della variegata antologia ci consentono una riflessione panoramica sulla poesia italiana contemporanea come veniva percepita all'inizio degli anni ottanta, delle ipotesi tematiche e qualche spunto storiografico sul breve periodo, ovviamente passibile di rettifica. Intanto è utile ricordarci del collaudato approccio fenomenologico di Anceschi, che permette di accostarsi ad alcuni campioni come esempi di poetica in atto e generalmente *implicita*, cioè rilevata dalle poesie medesime lette al convegno dai poeti antologizzati, e ad altri come esempi di poetica *esplicita*, che riguardano le riflessioni dei poeti stessi sulla propria poesia appena letta al pubblico e sulla poesia in generale. Si tenga presente inoltre che l'orizzonte di comprensione è qui fortemente marcato in senso empirico, in quanto i poeti, sulla falsariga di una crescente tendenza, forse caratteristica dei tempi, di leggere i propri testi in pubblico, si esprimono parlando direttamente a un pubblico determinato, rispondendo a domande particolari, e quindi in maniera diversa da come avviene quando stendono i loro elaborati nel silenzio del proprio studiolo e per l'amorfo lettore di una tale rivista o di un tale libro. Infatti nel corso del dibattito si colgono di sghembo non programmatiche ma utili asserzioni—riprodotte fedelmente con tutti i ghirigori sintattici del parlato spontaneo—sull'ipotetica morte delle avanguardie (c'erano parecchi neoavanguardisti tra i poeti), sulla questione del riflusso e del suo rapporto con la statuto della letteratura, oltre che le ideali filiazioni con le quali nel rispondere i poeti provavano a identificarsi. C'è anche un rivelatorio scambio tra Bigongiari e Sanguineti sulla sottile se non insidiosa questione filosofica se venga prima la lettura o la scrittura.

Non si può, in queste sede, analizzare alcun testo specifico, tuttavia possiamo riassumere le nostre impressioni. Per ciò che riguarda le poetiche della poesia italiana contemporanea, nella tornata conclusiva Mario Petrucciani ha ricordato che a partire dal secondo dopoguerra un elenco tutt'altro che completo dei diversi tipi di poesia ai quali è stata bene o male affibbiata una formula (o schema, o targhetta identificatoria . . . nessuno, mi pare, ha fatto uso della parola-concetto "poetica") ne conta 41, a partire dalla poesia postermetica, dell'istanza religiosa, neosperimentale, quinta generazione, eccetera eccetera attraverso la poesia del nonsenso, del neo-orfismo, la body poesia fino a oggi: tante poetiche paragonabili ai di allora 41 governi della repubblica! Ne risulta che la vita media di ogni neoprogetto è di sei-otto mesi. Ora se ciò è utile per ricordarci della labilità, quando non sia infatti effimera estroversione, della progettualità operativa e sociale del fare poesia, non è detto però che la critica debba astenersi dal tentare di venire a capo di talune tendenze al di là e al di sopra delle singole manifestazioni poetiche. Del resto Anceschi ci ha da tempo insegnato che le poetiche sono tante quanti sono i poeti, e spesso in un poeta coesistono diverse poetiche; dunque non per questo bisogna rinunciare all'ipotesi di una poetica generale, empiricamente e storicamente fondata, una poetica che tende a diventare istituzione e il cui effetto tende a ripercuotersi sulle singole produzioni. In diversa luce, Armando Gnisci ribadisce che, forse, alla fin fine la poesia è una cosa—sorpresa, dono miracoloso, ecc.—, la spiegazione (cioè la critica), "è un'altra cosa che ha altri regni da dominare." Lo spazio della critica viene così a situarsi tra i termini del titolo del convegno: "il poeta e la poesia, in quei vuoti che stanno tra il poeta

e la *e*, e tra la *e* e la poesia," ribadendo la necessità del giuoco tra i due termini, osservazioni che purtroppo il pubblico ha lasciate cadere nel silenzio. Ma fare critica resta comunque un giocare su un terreno limaccioso e minato, un rischiare con delle mosse e spostamenti alla ricerca della comprensione di ciò che mette la comprensione continuamente in crisi.

L'ipotesi che qui si tenta è tematica in senso lato. Dal libro si possono rilevare almeno tre grandi aree con determinate caratteristiche: a) poetiche oniriche e personalistiche formalmente ambigue; b) poetiche della dissoluzione formale e metatestuale; c) poetiche della narratività e ricostituzione formale. Nel primo gruppo incontriamo testi e riflessioni di poeti come Dario Bellezza, Giorgio Caproni, Margherita Guidacci, Luciano Erba, Mario Luzi, Giovanni Raboni, Vittorio Sereni, Maria Luisa Spaziani e Nelo Risi. Alcuni di questi poeti esperiscono e intendono il fare poesia come psicanalisi, per esempio, esorcismo della paura della morte e destoricizzazione del corpo in Bellezza, il cui testo è marcato da una dialettica della reticenza; oppure andirivieni ossessivo di un tema, per esempio, la follia dell'omicida, che comporta il suo opposto o suicidio, in Caproni, secondo cui l'uomo sarebbe irreparabilmente uno e bino. Con Erba ci ritroviamo all'aspetto artigianale del fare poesia, alla lirica come minuziosa ricerca dell'etimologia del sogno, un consapevole onirismo che lo accomuna alla Guidacci, (la quale però, a livello testuale, tende al prosastico). Luzi coltiva un debole surrealismo ritmico radicato nelle pulsioni del vivente, annullando l'annosa e per lui futile distinzione tra letteratura e realtà. Sereni sembra condividere questa vocazione di fare della poesia una istantanea in cui confluiscono, coincidendo, esperienza reale ed esperienza testuale. Anche Raboni radica le sue composizioni nell'esperienza personale, ma giocando di riflesso, per così dire: far parlare un quadro, poeticizzare il ritratto (in ciò non dissimile da Nelo Risi) alla ricerca del nome puro, dell'atemporalità dell'immagine o della specularità analitica. Due poeti che stanno ai margini di questa categoria sono Valentino Zeichen, che scrive poesie d'occasione, addirittura programmandole e quindi eliminando in parte la componente viscerale, e Alfredo Giuliani, sempre più spinto nelle tandre del grottesco, dell'ironia giocosa e farsesca. Ci sono poi due poeti che stanno a cavallo tra il primo gruppo e il terzo, in quanto si esprimono a livello di una esperienza diretta e personale ma tuttavia tentano anche la via della ricostituzione formale del tessuto poetico; essi sono Maria Luisa Spaziani e Amelia Rosselli, più classica e subliminalmente ironica la prima, più ontologica ed esistenziale la seconda. (Tra l'altro la Spaziani ci ricorda, nel corso del dibattito, che l'inventore del verso libero non è Gustave Kahn, come da più parti ritenuto, ma una donna polacca all'epoca trasferitasi a Parigi, Marie Krisinska).

Nel secondo gruppo, ossia delle poetiche della dissoluzione formale e metaformale, si possono collocare Elio Pagliarani, Edoardo Sanguineti, e Lamberto Pignotti. Per Pagliarani il testo assume la configurazione di un recitativo drammatico a struttura formale solo in apparenza rigida: nella dialettica tra segno e referente, il continuo scarto non permette l'ipotesi di una tensione costante o di una zona semantica rappresentabile perché il testo è composto da ritagli, intarsi e insomma da un collage che mina la medesima possibilità di significazione della strutture formali. D'accordo con Sanguineti su questo procedimento, Pagliarani complica continuamente il discorso, continuando indefesso l'opera di sperimentalista di punta. Del resto per i poeti di questo gruppo la poesia è anche cognitiva, rappresentando la possibilità di una conoscenza simbolica che si realizza attraverso il continuato slittamento delle forme svuotate dei linguaggi (o codici) sociali, burocratici, sentimentali, ecc., finché la me-

tafora non emerge, per così dire, dall'altro lato, alla fine. Sanguineti concepisce la composizione del testo come un tentativo di fare dei nodi (appunto simbolici) con stringhe di discorso smunte e sfilacciate. Pignotti, che innesta alla poesia verbale la ricca esperienza del visivo dichiara che, dopotutto, "sappiamo quasi tutto" o comunque tantissimo su come funziona la scrittura, il linguaggio, la poesia, e che nel testo soggetto e oggetto si compenetrano e spesso si scambiano i ruoli, per cui vale la pena divertirsi nell'esperienza di questo tutto sommato salutare estraneamento. Pignotti è comunque anche proteso verso il terzo gruppo poiché la sue ricercatissime variazioni fonosimboliche oscillano su strutture potenzialmente narrative, e a livello semantico ci ritroviamo con i grandi temi del viaggio, dell'avventura e dell'amore.

Anche nel terzo gruppo, c), ossia della narratività e della ricostituzione formale, ci imbattiamo in poeti diversissimi tra di loro quali Elio Filippo Accrocca, Piero Bigongiari, Maurizio Cucchi, Francesco Paolo Memmo, Antonio Porta, Alessandro Parronchi, David Turoldo, Carlo Betocchi e Silvio Ramat. E naturalmente anche qui ci ritroviamo con poeti che in passato sono stati collocati sotto egide diversissime, tuttavia, dobbiamo ribadire che questa categoria è dai margini amplissimi, costruita ad hoc in base a questa antologia, e peraltro ci ricorda che le poetiche anche di un solo poeta si sviluppano nel tempo, mutano con la storia personale e sociale del singolo. Forse questo è il gruppo che più degli altri ha evidenziato la maggiore consapevolezza del perenne rinnovamento necessario di fronte alla dissoluzione delle grandi istituzioni poetiche dell'epoca Moderna, tra fine secolo e post-Novissimi. Accrocca, per esempio, riscopre la temporalità del "mentre," capta la realtà come memoria e si libera della schiavitù e complessità ossessionante dell'identità a tutti i costi. Bigongiari, il cui dettato è straordinariamente nuovo e fresco, afferma che per il poeta "il tempo è qualcosa di assolutamente reversibile," e nel suo testo vi si scorge una narratività "critica" che problematizza costantemente, diluendo la lirica, abbassando il tono, ma accostando il pensiero. Anche Cucchi si allontana dal lirismo apocalittico e/o consolatorio dei tempi che furono per iscrivere i suoi versi lungo la temporalità del "figurante," dell'espressione che transita a contatto con elementi primordiali come il mare, la terra, la luce, il desiderio, avviandosi dunque verso una allegoresi post-moderna in cui la lirica e la situazione narrativa coincidano. Paolo Memmo pratica una poetica dell'accumulo (anziché della sottrazione), della volontà (anziché della fin troppo facile indifferenza storica o cinica che sia) alla ricerca di una verità (anziché della Verità), per cui il tessuto della sua poesia è contraddistinto dal canto, dal "voler dire," dal recupero che si proietta — "il presente non esiste" — nella propria memoria a venire. Sul medesimo palco ascoltiamo Parrochi, lineare e discorsivo, consapevolmente informato da una motivazione etica che spesso decade nel sermone, ma preoccupato dello scorrere di un tempo storico questa volta decisamente irreversibile. Porta si rifà a Pound per ciò che riguarda la sua tensione verso il linguaggio, partendo da grumi di esperienza — le "lettere" — ma ampliandoli e sviluppandoli alla ricerca di una durata che sia principalmente del linguaggio e in secondo luogo del referente. Anche di Ramat ci si aspettava qualcosa di diverso, eppure eccolo rinnovato con una vena narrativa che sfiora il poema, significandosi tra archetipi e agiografie e prodomi del crepuscolo degli immortali, innalzando una sorta di debole inno alla condizione nomadica del narrante, scopertosi perituro come i suoi dei, vero poeta postmoderno. Gli unici "marginali" in questo gruppo sarebbero Betocchi, per il quale la poesia nasce dal nulla e non riveste nessuna importanza né nella vita del suo autore né per le sorti del mondo, e Turoldo, dal mellifluido e potente verso biblico, forse l'unico poeta

“religioso” oggi in Italia.

Se si pensa ai lavori posteriori al 1982 di tutti poeti convegnisti e antologizzati in questo libro, e si considera la questione di un orizzonte postmoderno informato da una istanza etica, da una volontà ricostruttiva formale e tendenzialmente allegorica ed ontologica insieme, si vedrà bene che i poeti che ci stanno per dire qualcosa di “nuovo,” di valido e forse cruciale sono Accrocca, Bigongiari, Cucchi, Memmo e Ramat. Circoscritta nel tempo e nello spazio, questa è solo una ipotesi, uno scandaglio critico-ermeneutico da confermare altrove ma una proposta cionostante, quod erat demonstrandum.

PETER CARRAVETTA

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Maria Pia Pozzato, ed. *L'idea deforme. Interpretazioni esoteriche di Dante*. Introduzione di Umberto Eco e postfazione di Alberto Asor Rosa. Milano: Bompiani, 1989 (Studi Bompiani). Pp. 330.

Il volume comprende i seguenti lavori: Umberto Eco, "La semiotica ermetica e il 'paradigma del velame'"; Maria Pia Pozzato, Prefazione; Helena Lozano Miralles, "'Dantis amor': Gabriele Rossetti e il 'paradigma del velame'"; Maria R. Lacalle Zalduendo, "Il Dante eretico, rivoluzionario e socialista di Eugène Aroux"; Sandra Cavicchioli, "Giovanni Pascoli: del segreto strutturale nella *Divina Commedia*"; Maria Pia Pozzato, "Luigi Valli e la setta dei 'Fedeli d'Amore'"; Cinzia Bianchi, "Rodolfo Benini: un'interpretazione in chiave numerologica della *Divina Commedia*"; Claudia Miranda, "René Guénon o la vertigine della virtualità"; Regina Psaki, "La critica dantesca ortodossa e gli allegoristi"; Maria Pia Pozzato, Conclusioni; Alberto Asor Rosa, Postfazione; Bibliografia, a cura di Regina Psaki.

Questo libro da una parte vuole essere una raccolta di saggi su Dante, dall'altra il banco di prova di una "nuova" teoria. La novità è qui virgolettata perché riflette l'attualità della proposta insieme alla fiducia accordata a un atteggiamento interpretativo antichissimo. La *semiosi ermetica*, spiega Eco nell'Introduzione, è "basata sull'individuazione di rapporti di simpatia che legano reciprocamente micro e macrocosmo" (9). La somiglianza implica una fisica o una metafisica della simpatia universale e questa si regge su un ordine di rapporti, su una semiotica, implicita o esplicita. Lo scopo del volume, da un punto di vista teorico, è allora quello di tracciare una pianta di questa struttura o, almeno, di riconoscerla e saggiarne l'utilità critica.

Il materiale di ricerca nel libro è come chiuso da un doppio abbraccio: alla introduzione di Eco corrisponde la postfazione di Asor Rosa e le pareti interne dei due pezzi toccano la prefazione e la conclusione della curatrice, cui anche si deve il saggio centrale. Gli autori sono ben consci della "deformità" della cosa se Eco annota in fondo al suo intervento: "Il titolo di questo libro, *L'idea deforme*, è un anagramma di *Fedeli d'Amore* (autore Stefano Bartezzaghi). Confido che lettori sospettosi non traggano illazioni esoteriche dal fatto che le autrici sono 7. Più due autori, all'inizio e alla fine, si arriva a 9. Prefazione ricerca e appendice fanno 3. Alberto Asor Rosa è stato invitato a commentare il lavoro per le sue competenze d'italianista e non per il chiasmo onomastico che mirabilmente epitomizza la mistica ossessione degli adepti del volume. Parimenti, è casuale il fatto che la differenza tra *Um* e *Al* sia data dal fatto che il secondo nome trae le sue lettere dalla prima metà dell'alfabeto e il primo dalla seconda" (37).

F.G.

Filippo Redditi. *Exhortatio ad Petrum Medicem con appendice di lettere*. Introduzione, testo critico, commento a cura di Paolo Viti. Firenze: Olschki, 1989. Pp. lvi, 153.

This brief encomium of Lorenzo the Magnificent, written between 1487 and 1489, is presented with an impressive apparatus which includes the manuscript variants,

historical and bibliographical notes, as well as a textual analysis. It is supplemented with 25 letters, some previously unpublished, which constitute the only other extant writings of the author. In the 50-page introduction the editor provides a reconstruction of the background relating to the text on the basis of all available data and archival documents. He also describes the dual nature of the work, in part apologetic but also didactic, and explains the place it occupies in the genre of panegyric literature of the Renaissance devoted to the Medici. The line-by-line commentary to the text, almost 60 pages long, singles out the relevant historical references, literary echoes and influences, and the various topics treated, as well as the linguistic, stylistic and rhetorical features of the work. This critical edition provides both factual documentation and literary appreciation. Viti's judicial assessment of external and internal evidence (including interesting conjectures on unusual omissions in this celebration of the Magnificent) highlights the far-reaching implications of this humanist text. Several indices included at the end facilitate consultation of the volume.

O.Z.P.

Lucia Miele. *Modelli e ruoli sociali nei "Memoriali" di Diomede Carafa*. Napoli: Federico & Ardia, 1989 (Studi e testi di Letteratura Italiana 16). Pp. 155.

Dopo aver esaminato la posizione di alcuni scrittori della seconda metà del Quattrocento che danno vita nel Regno di Napoli a "una letteratura del comportamento mirata a interessi e finalità civili e militari" (7) e passato in rassegna le posizioni assunte dalla critica nei confronti del Carafa, la Miele (che utilizza la recente edizione critica dei *Memoriali*, a cura di Franca Petrucci Nardelli, Roma: Bonacci, 1988) si sofferma ad analizzare gli aspetti fondamentali indicati dallo scrittore, alla luce dei suoi ideali di ragionevolezza, di serena religiosità e di moralità, a proposito di alcune figure centrali nella società del tempo: quella del principe, nel suo ruolo di provvido coordinatore delle risorse economiche del suo regno e di oculato amministratore della giustizia; quella del cortigiano, teso ad assicurarsi il successo nei suoi rapporti con il primo improntati ad obbedienza ed amore; quella dell'uomo d'armi, lato di massima importanza nell'ideale del capo di stato, a proposito del quale ritornano le stesse preoccupazioni di natura economica, di previdenza, di moderazione e di paterna benignità; e quella della donna, vista soprattutto nella sua funzione di moglie, di custode del patrimonio familiare e di sottomessa, ma rispettata, compagna dell'uomo.

A.F.

Raffaele Manica. *Il critico e il furore*. Urbino: QuattroVenti, 1988 (Quaderni di studi rinascimentali). Pp. 75.

Il volume contiene una rassegna della trattatistica rinascimentale intorno alla dibattuta questione del furore poetico. Nel definire l'oggetto d'indagine e restringerne lo spettro di possibili speculazioni critiche, Manica prende subito le distanze dall'ispirazione di tipo romantico, riassunta nella formula "andare verso il divino." Questa, egli dice, opponendosi alla sintesi spaziosa di Eric Havelock, è tutt'altra cosa dalla nozione greca e rinascimentale del "venire dal divino" (7).

L'origine del dibattito è indicata in Platone, in particolare nei dialoghi *Ione* e *Fedro*. La ripresa nel Rinascimento è segnata da una parte da Agrippa di Netteshein,

che individua il furore poetico in un "umore" del corpo, e dall'altra da Ficino, che oppone all'*humor melancholicus* di mediazione aristotelica l'immateriale furore divino platonico. La questione si radicalizza intorno a queste due diverse basi filosofiche con una miriade di interventi: "Dall'inizio alla metà del Cinquecento, attorno alle fonti platoniche e aristoteliche concernenti il furore, si dice tutto e il contrario di tutto" (17-8). La discussione raggiunge il suo acme nell'opposizione Patrizi-Castelvetro in un clima culturale in cui "da una parte l'aristotelismo esce dalle università per imporre la sua egemonia; dall'altra il platonismo sente affievolirsi la voce giorno dopo giorno" (26-7). Alle due divergenti posizioni si aggiunge, a una certa distanza da entrambe, quella del Fracastoro: non si tratta di una mediazione, ma di una prospettiva d'alta quota con cui si ritrova "un platonismo antico, sorpreso alle fonti" (29). La rassegna procede con ampia discussione critica (e sempre sui trattati, senza mai toccare esperienze di pratica poetica) su sviluppi particolari del dibattito fino al Seicento.

F.G.

Pasquale Sabbatino. *La 'scienza' della scrittura. Dal progetto del Bembo al Manuale*. Firenze: Olschki, 1988 (Biblioteca dell'Archivum Romanicum 215). Pp. 253.

La prima parte del saggio analizza lo sviluppo della "scienza" della scrittura volgare dagli *Asolani*, l'opera con la quale il Bembo mette sulla scena cortigiana la letteratura petrarchesca, alle *rime*, di cui viene discussa la tradizione a stampa dalla prima edizione alle due terze impressioni. La seconda parte presenta l'edizione filologica di un manuale ricavato dalle *Prose della volgar lingua* e contenuto in forma manoscritta nel codice marciano It. X.125 (=6533), che si prefiggeva come scopo di "tradurre tutta la miniera grammaticale del Bembo, organizzata in dialogo e diretta agli 'studiosi', in un manuale sostanzialmente pratico nell'uso e indirizzato a un pubblico meno specialistico e più esteso" (149).

M.C.

Maria Cristina Cafisse, Francesco D'Episcopo, Vincenzo Dolla, Tonia Fiorino, Lucia Miele, eds. *Rinascimento meridionale e altri studi in onore di Mario Santoro*. Napoli: Società Editrice Napoletana, 1987. Pp. VIII, 498.

La miscellanea comprende ventisette contributi, riuniti in ordine alfabetico per autore, di amici ed allievi per celebrare il ritiro dall'insegnamento dello studioso napoletano, accentrati particolarmente su uno dei momenti letterari e culturali, il Rinascimento meridionale, al quale il Santoro stesso ha dedicato parte cospicua della sua attività di ricercatore e di critico. In essi vengono variamente presi in considerazione la concezione dell'amore nei trovatori provenzali (V. Russo), i rapporti fra Alfonso, duca di Calabria, e Lorenzo il Magnifico (G. Varanini), il breve soggiorno a Firenze di Eleonora d'Aragona (P. Viti), la recezione di Virgilio da parte del Pontano (F. D'Episcopo), e gli interventi di Pietro Summonte nell'edizione delle sue opere (L. Monti Sabia), problemi particolari riguardanti il Galateo ed alcune sue opere (D. Moro), quali l'epistola *De educatione* (L. Miele), la novella come genere e un modello specifico presso sei diversi scrittori (M. Olsen), gli ideali politici dell'Ariosto nei confronti di Francia e Spagna (W. Moretti), alcuni epigrammi latini di Antonino Lenio (M. Marti), l'epistolario del Minturno (A. Greco), l'influsso delle *Prose* del Bembo sui sonetti scritti

dal Rota in morte della moglie e le relative *Annotazioni* dell'Ammirato (P. Sabbatino), la composizione e le edizioni delle *Lagrima di San Pietro* del Tansillo (T. R. Toscano), un inedito di Francesco Bolognetti (A. N. Mancini), la *Siracusa* di Paolo Regio (A. Mauriello), la selva incantata della *Gerusalemme* (G. Barberi Squarotti), alcuni aspetti dell'attività letteraria di Scipione de' Monti (V. Dolla), vari trattati gastronomici del Cinque e Seicento (R. Frattarolo), la versione di Vincenzo Braca in dialetto napoletano dell'*Arcadia* del Sannazaro (M. Rak), i libri e gli oggetti d'arte dei fratelli Giovan Battista e Giovan Vincenzo Della Porta (G. Fulco), la figura dell'illuminista Ignazio Falconieri (A. Vallone), l'attività dell'erudito Agostino Gervasio in particolare per quanto riguarda l'opera del Galateo (P. Giannantonio), l'atteggiamento del Settembrini nei confronti dell'umanesimo meridionale (T. Fiorino), il *Viaggio elettorale* del De Sanctis (G. Innamorati) e il suo interesse per Niccolò Sole (A. Palermo), la recensione del Capuana a un'edizione della *Giapigia* del Galateo (M. C. Cafisse), e la critica del Momigliano sugli scrittori meridionali del Quattrocento (G. Ponte).

A. F.

Anna Maria Razzoli Roio, ed. *La fucina poetica. Madrigalisti siciliani del Seicento* (Archivio Barocco). Parma: Zara, 1987. Pp. 93.

La Razzoli Roio, che ha pubblicato qualche anno fa l'edizione critica delle rime italiane di Filippo Paruta (*Intermedi e Rime*, Parma 1985), ci offre ora un'opera che mira a delineare un quadro generale della situazione della lirica in Sicilia tra Cinque e Seicento. Il Paruta (1555 ca.-1629), figura interessantissima di uomo di lettere (poeta in toscano, latino e dialetto), storico, diplomatico, operatore culturale nel senso più ampio, è il punto fisso di riferimento dei poeti qui antologizzati. Egli viene definito il madrigalista siciliano per eccellenza e, per chiarire i suoi collegamenti con la lirica coeva più nota, se ne riconoscono i debiti tassiani.

"I madrigali qui editi," recita la *Nota al testo* in fondo al volume, "fanno parte di una silloge messa insieme da Giovanni Battista Caruso in una edizione ormai rara dal titolo *Rime degli Accademici Accesi di Palermo etc. . .*," del 1726. I componimenti sono comunque tutti secenteschi, pubblicati inizialmente tra il 1603 e il 1664 in diverse raccolte. La presente antologia comprende lavori di Luigi d'Heredia, 25 madrigali, (*Infidi lumi*, 1603); Cesare Lanza, 19, (*La fucina amorosa*, 1608); Giulio De Morra, 12, (*Tantalo*, 1611); Scipione Henrico, 13, (*La bella fucina*, 1619); Baldassarre Falsaperla, 4, (*Pallade*, 1669). Le note esplicative includono, con la descrizione del metro, i nomi dei compositori che tradussero in musica i madrigali.

Parte del volume sono due brevi saggi, *Stazioni della madrigalistica siciliana e Il madrigale e la musica*. Nel primo, dopo aver accennato all'atmosfera culturale tra i due secoli nell'isola, caratterizzata dall'attività delle accademie (Solitari e Solleciti prima, Accesi poi e infine Riaccesi), la Razzoli Roio ci dà una serie di ritratti dei madrigalisti antologizzati. Tra questi spicca l'Henrico (o Errico, come altri lo vuole) che è da considerarsi tra i più illuminati letterati dell'epoca: socio delle maggiori accademie d'Italia (Oziosi di Napoli, Umoristi di Roma, Incogniti di Venezia), scrittore di teatro e filosofo, oltre che poeta e critico autorevole dell'*Adone* mariniano (*L'Occhiale appannato*, 1629, in risposta all'*Occhiale* di Tommaso Stigliani di due anni prima). Ne *Il madrigale e la musica* l'autrice conferma il tono melico dei componimenti della raccolta nel rilevare una sintassi piana, scorrevole, e "rime facili, giocate su sintagmi

temi (Amore-core; core-dolore; stelle-belle), talora impreziosite da effetti 'ad eco' [che] si rincorrono in uno schema metrico che privilegia la rima baciata" (84).

F.G.

Emanuele Tesauro. *Edipo*. A cura di Carlo Ossola, commento e note di Paolo Getrevi. Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 1987 (Esperia). Pp. 197.

Ripubblica la tragedia dello scrittore piemontese edita per la prima volta nel 1661 (ma scritta probabilmente in anni precedenti), seguendo fedelmente la *princeps*. Nella presentazione l'Ossola, ricordati i testi teatrali che si ispirano al mito di Edipo dalla metà del Cinquecento alla fine del Settecento, lo esamina alla luce delle teorie di Comparetti, di Rank, di Freud e di Propp, riportandolo alla "storia della conquista del potere" (25), e mette in evidenza in varie versioni, e soprattutto in questa del Tesauro, la compresenza dei "temi dell'inconscio individuale con le ragioni politiche dello stato" (28). Il Getrevi traccia quindi la biografia e la fortuna critica dello scrittore, soffermandosi sulla produzione teatrale, occupazione non occasionale ma costante lungo tutto l'arco della vita del Tesauro, e sull'*Edipo* in particolare, del quale vengono soprattutto chiariti i rapporti con la tragedia di Seneca (ricordati varie volte anche nelle note).

Seguono i criteri di trascrizione (fra i quali si avverta che il cambiamento di "i" in "gli" davanti al sostantivo "dei" ha determinato nel testo dei versi ipermetri: cfr. ad esempio II.173: 96).

A.F.

Mario Santoro, ed. *Leopardi nella critica internazionale*. Napoli: Federico & Ardia, 1989 (Quaderni di "Esperienze letterarie" 1). Pp. 302.

Comprende venti saggi (di cui cinque inediti) di studiosi che, ad eccezione di tre, operano in istituzioni fuori dell'Italia, miranti a illustrare alcuni capitoli della fortuna del Leopardi all'estero (con le indagini riguardanti gli Stati Uniti di C. Ascari, la Cecoslovacchia di M. Pažitka, la Jugoslavia di S. Roić e l'Inghilterra di G. Singh), i suoi rapporti con altri poeti (come i giudizi su Byron e le affinità con Pope, di L. Press, o con il romantico russo Tjutcev, di N. G. Elina), la sua interpretazione presso alcuni moderni quali Solmi (J. Laffin), Toffanin (M. Santoro), o anche Cardarelli (C. Di Biase), aspetti di poesie particolari (P. G. Conti e M. Orcel si rivolgono a "L'infinito," D. Kelly a "Il tramonto della luna," A. Urbancic a "Consalvo," A. Verna ad "Aspasia" e J. Uguiewska ai grandi idilli), l'atteggiamento a proposito del concetto di felicità (D. Glenn), di quello di decadenza storica (M. Muñoz Muñoz) e della morte (V. Russo), o in generale il suo ruolo nello sviluppo della poesia satirica (E. Saprykina). I saggi sono accompagnati da brevi riassunti in inglese (o in italiano, nei sette casi in cui è inglese l'originale), in francese e in spagnolo.

A.F.

Fabio Finotti. *Sistema letterario e diffusione del Decadentismo nell'Italia di fine '800. Il carteggio Vittorio Pica - Neera*. Firenze: Olschki, 1988 (Biblioteca di Lettere Italiane 36). Pp. 173.

Il lungo saggio introduttivo (9-122) traccia le vicissitudini della cultura napoletana negli ultimi decenni dell'Ottocento. Il primo capitolo analizza la mortificazione della

vocazione cosmopolita della cultura accademica della città partenopea alla fine del regno borbonico e la crescita di una cultura dilettantesca, extra universitaria. Il secondo capitolo si concentra sui rapporti tra cultura universitaria e critica militante, soprattutto quella dei giornali e delle riviste napoletani degli anni '80. Il terzo capitolo discute il ruolo di Vittorio Pica nella diffusione della cultura europea a Napoli, e in special modo del Decadentismo. La seconda parte del volume presenta il carteggio tra Vittorio Pica e Neera.

M.C.

Wladimir Kryszynski. *Il paradigma inquieto. Pirandello e lo spazio comparativo della modernità*. Roma: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1988. Pp. 484.

Il volume si prefigge di studiare l'opera pirandelliana in un contesto comparativo e alla luce degli studi sulla modernità. L'opera di Pirandello viene così vista come "discorso precursore di una modernità che qui viene analizzata nei suoi principali parametri e nelle sue invarianti: soggettività, ironia, frantumazione ed autoriflessività" (risvolto di copertina). Il primo capitolo analizza l'opera di Pirandello in quanto problema di letteratura comparata. Nel secondo capitolo l'analisi si concentra sulle opere maggiori dello scrittore, i *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* e *l'Enrico IV*. Il terzo capitolo segue la poetica del pirandellismo in rapporto all'evoluzione del teatro moderno. Il quarto e ultimo capitolo colloca l'opera e la poetica pirandelliana nel discorso sul moderno e sul postmoderno.

M.C.

Glauco Cambon. *Verso "Paterson." William Carlos Williams dalla lirica all'epos*. Cosenza: Marra Editore, 1987 [ma 1988]. Pp. 115.

Questo lavoro del noto studioso italiano scomparso recentemente è testimonianza estrema di lunga fedeltà ad un impegno accademico svolto come ponte tra due culture: il volume riguarda uno dei massimi poeti americani di questo secolo, ma l'attenzione del critico è puntata soprattutto sulla situazione italiana da Ungaretti a Sereni. Ricordando l'influenza di Pound ed Eliot in Italia e le traduzioni di Montale "assiduo frequentatore della poesia nordamericana," Cambon tiene a sottolineare in particolar modo la posizione di Ungaretti, "la spiccata affinità che intercorre fra la poetica sperimentale di quest'ultimo e quella williamsiana, parimenti impegnata sulla paratassi, sull'abolizione della punteggiatura, sull'eliminazione del lessico letterario e sulla preminenza dell'immagine-oggetto" (16). Nonostante questo, lo studioso è costretto a concludere che Williams è stato, per molti nostri poeti, una occasione mancata. Una occasione, però, raccolta appieno da Sereni: "E resta il fatto che con l'opera di Vittorio Sereni, Williams interseca fruttuosamente la nostra storia letteraria. Come avvenne a suo tempo per Whitman e poi per Pound ed Eliot, è anche questa un'acclimatazione, o meglio, una cittadinanza onoraria. Questi poeti appartengono anche all'Italia" (17).

F.G.

Northrop Frye. *Mito metafora simbolo*. Trad. di Carla Pezzini Plevano e Francesca Valente Gorjup. Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1989 (Nuova Biblioteca di Cultura). Pp. 218.

Il volume comprende una cospicua serie di contributi recenti del celebre studioso canadese. Alcuni di essi sono del tutto inediti; altri sono già stati pubblicati ma, nella

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F.G.

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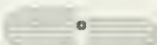
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